DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 205 EA 031 684


AUTHOR Bolman, Lee G.; Deal, Terrence E.
TITLE Reframing the Path to School Leadership: A Guide for Teachers and Principals.
ISBN ISBN-0-7619-4607-1
PUB DATE 2002-00-00
NOTE 138p.; Research funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education.
AVAILABLE FROM Corwin Press, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320-2218 ($24.95). Tel: 800-818-7243 (Toll Free); Fax: 800-417-2466 (Toll Free); e-mail: order@corwinpress.com; Web site: http://www.corwinpress.com.
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Beginning Principals; Beginning Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Leaders Guides; *Leadership; Leadership Styles; *Leadership Training



ABSTRACT

The best leaders use multiple frames or lenses to view common challenges and to solve their most difficult problems. This book contains a series of dialogs between a novice and a master teacher, and between a new and a seasoned principal as they demonstrate how framing and reframing challenges can bring clarity, help to anticipate problems, and lead to more comprehensive and powerful leadership strategies. The four frames most commonly used by teachers and administrators are: the political frame, where conflict and compromise are a constant source of renewal; the human-resource frame, where sharing individual needs and motives nurtures a sense of ownership; the structural frame, where clear organizational standards and goals lead to greater productivity; and the symbolic frame, where culture, rituals, and beliefs cultivate shared values and meanings. These frames are powerful tools. They help people see things they once overlooked and come to grips with what is really going on. By reframing situations, educators can ultimately gain more confidence and certainty in their decisions, become more versatile and effective in their responses, and reduce the anxieties that can arise with difficult choices. (Contains 14 references.) (RT)



Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

# Reframing the Path to School Leadership

## A Guide for Teachers and Principals

ED 465 205

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
G. Alkema
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
2B

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Lee G. Bolman
Terrence E. Deal

EA031684

# Reframing the Path to School Leadership

**CORWIN PRESS**

The Corwin Press logo—a raven striding across an open book—represents the happy union of courage and learning. We are a professional-level publisher of books and journals for K-12 educators, and we are committed to creating and providing resources that embody these qualities. Corwin's motto is "Success for All Learners."

# Reframing the Path to School Leadership

## A Guide For Teachers and Principals

Lee G. Bolman
Terrence E. Deal

**CORWIN PRESS, INC.**
A Sage Publications Company
Thousand Oaks, California

Copyright © 2002 by Corwin Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. When forms and sample documents are included, their use is authorized only by educators, local school sites, and/or noncommercial entities who have purchased the book. Except for that usage, no part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

*For information:*

Corwin Press, Inc.
A Sage Publications Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@corwinpress.com

Sage Publications Ltd.
6 Bonhill Street
London EC2A 4PU
United Kingdom

Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
M-32 Market
Greater Kailash I
New Delhi 110 048 India

Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Bolman, Lee G.
Reframing the path to school leadership: A guide for teachers and principals / Lee G. Bolman, Terrence E. Deal.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p. ).
ISBN 0-7619-4606-3 (c)
ISBN 0-7619-4607-1 (p)
1. School management and organization. 2. Educational leadership. I. Deal, Terrence E. II. Title.
LB2805 .B58 2002
371.2--dc21

2002000165

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

02 03 04 05 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

| | |
|---|---|
| *Acquisitions Editor:* | Robb Clouse |
| *Associate Editor:* | Kylee Liegl |
| *Editorial Assistant:* | Erin Buchanan |
| *Copy Editor:* | Karen Slaught |
| *Production Editor:* | Denise Santoyo |
| *Typesetter:* | Siva Math Setters, Chennai, India |
| *Cover Designer:* | Michael Dubowe |

# *Contents*


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Acknowledgments** | | **vii** |
| **About the Authors** | | **viii** |
| **Introduction** | | **1** |
| | **Part I: A Pair of Rookies** | **9** |
| 1. | A New Teacher's First Day | 11 |
| 2. | Getting Started on the Right Foot | 16 |
| 3. | A New Principal Finds a Wise Friend | 21 |
| *Leadership Lessons: Seeing and Solving Barriers to Entry* | | *25* |
| | **Part II: The Political Frame** | **29** |
| 4. | The Old Guard and the New Principal | 31 |
| 5. | The Tracking Wars: School Politics at Work | 39 |
| *Leadership Lessons: Map the Terrain, Hone Your Skills* | | *51* |
| | **Part III: The Human Resource Frame** | **55** |
| 6. | Sagging Morale | 57 |
| *Leadership Lessons: Build Relationships and Empower Yourself* | | *66* |
| | **Part IV: The Structural Frame** | **69** |
| 7. | Student Discipline: Who's Really in Charge? | 71 |
| 8. | Standards | 79 |
| *Leadership Lessons: Align the Structure With the Work* | | *84* |

**Part V: The Symbolic Frame** **87**

9. The End of the Year: Symbols and Culture in Schools 89

10. "I'm Just a Great Teacher!" 97

*Leadership Lessons: Celebrate Values and Culture* *104*

**Part VI: Values, Ethics, and Spirit** **107**

11. Teaching and Leading: Finding a Balance 109

12. A Talk About Values 116

13. The Essence of Teaching: Leaving a Legacy 119

14. Passing the Torch 126

*Epilogue* *132*

**Annotated Bibliography** **134**

# *Acknowledgments*

Many of the ideas in this book were stimulated by our research on school leadership under the auspices of the National Center for Educational Leadership, funded under grants from the U.S. Department of Education. Our friends in Washington, David Stevenson and Ron Anson, were steady sources of both support and constructive criticism, and we are very grateful to both. We also owe much to our colleagues in NCEL for their ideas and encouragement. Ideas from Susan Johnson's work on the school as a workplace and from Carol Weiss's work on decision making are echoed in this book. Reva Chatman's doctoral thesis, "Fresh Roses," a novel about beginning teachers, and Tracy Kidder's wonderful chronicle of teacher Chris Zajac in *Among Schoolchildren* gave us both inspiration and a deeper understanding of classroom life. William Greenfield, Thomas P. Johnson, Ann Lieberman, Gayle Moller, Emmanuel L. Paparella, and Carrie Sedinger all provided very helpful comments and suggestions on earlier versions of the manuscript. Homa Aminmadani and Linda Corey provided terrific administrative support.

Our spouses, Sandy Deal and Joan Gallos, provided more than the usual support and love—without which writing would be dreary, if not impossible. Each also brought her own special expertise. Sandy Deal's extensive experience as a clinical psychologist greatly strengthened the teacher–student interactions in the book. Joan Gallos used her work on gender issues in the classroom and in adult life to provide many helpful insights; Joan's feel for good storytelling also strengthened this work in many ways. Many educators in the United States and abroad have been *our* mentors and guides, and we have learned more from them than we can ever say.

# *About the Authors*

**Lee G. Bolman** is the Marion Bloch/Missouri Chair in Leadership at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. An author, teacher, consultant, and speaker, he has written numerous books on leadership and organizations with coauthor Terry Deal, including best-sellers *Leading With Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit (1995, 2001)* and *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership (1991, 1997)*, as well as *The Path to School Leadership (1993)* and *Becoming a Teacher Leader (1994)*.

Bolman holds a BA in History and a PhD in Organizational Behavior from Yale University. He lives in Kansas City, Missouri, with his wife, Joan Gallos, and the two youngest of his children, Christopher and Bradley.

**Terrence E. Deal** is the Irving R. Melbo Professor at University of Southern California's Rossier School. He is an internationally famous lecturer and author who resides in San Louis Obispo, California, with his wife, Sandy. He has written numerous books on leadership and organizations. In addition to those written with Lee Bolman, he is the coauthor of *Corporate Cultures* (with Alan Kennedy, 1982) and *Shaping School Culture* (with Kurt Peterson, 1999).

Bolman and Deal's books have been translated into more than ten languages.

# *Introduction*

If you're a teacher or principal who wants to become a better leader, we wrote this book for you. It's intended as a portable companion, a mentor that is available anytime you need advice or counsel. You can take it with you, look it over after hours, consult it when trouble arises, and use it to stimulate a reflective dialogue—on your own or with colleagues. The book is filled with the words and wisdom of two seasoned veterans: Margaret Juhl, a master teacher, and Brenda Connors, a wise and warm veteran principal. Though they are fictional characters, they are deeply rooted in the real-world life of contemporary schools. They've been there, and they know what they're talking about because of wisdom gleaned from experience. They are exemplars for the countless teachers and principals who are blessed with unusual leadership skills and savvy.

A unique feature of this book is its focus on the intersection between life as a new teacher and the challenges faced by a novice principal. Though teachers and principals work in the same buildings, they often occupy very different worlds. Absence of mutual understanding and appreciation only exacerbates the inevitable tensions any working relationship will produce. The better each party understands the other's reality, the easier it will be for them to find mutually acceptable ways to fulfill the interests of both the school and its students.

Novice teachers and principals often bounce from one unpleasant surprise to another. Yet the unending stream of challenges and pitfalls are normal and highly predictable—if you know what to look for. The purpose of this book is to help you decipher what is really going on in schools to avoid the sinking feeling of being caught off guard. The key to becoming a highly effective teacher or principal is

to develop powerful habits of mind—profoundly practical ways of thinking about schools and classrooms. Most professionals painfully learn these lessons in the school of hard knocks—through trial and error. This book offers a quicker, less painful route to achieving the same goal.

Your first challenge as a new professional is to get the lay of the land. You need a way to make sense out of a confusing and messy terrain so that you can master what's going on and figure out your options. In diagnosing any situation, you will draw on past experience and learning. These have given you mental lenses that you rely on to define and frame reality. Even when your lenses are off target, you're stuck with them, because they're all you've got. Without them, your world would be a senseless blur. For a concrete example, study the following image.

Unless you read Chinese characters, the image makes no sense. If you saw it somewhere, perhaps on a menu in a Chinese restaurant, you would probably overlook it. But that's only because you can't decode it. If you could read Chinese, you would recognize it immediately as a very common word. Take another look, and you'll notice that it is composed of two separate characters. Each of these can be a word by itself, and each is a simplified picture of a type of person. Look at the character on the left. What kind of person could it represent? How about the character on the right?

The character on the left is a woman. You can see legs, a body, and a neck. The one on the right is a child. You can see it holding its arms out as if to hug the woman. You might imagine that woman-child together would mean *girl* or *daughter.* But the logic of Chinese script isn't often literal. Together, the two characters form the word *hao,* which means good. To the ancient Chinese, and maybe to you as well, portraying a woman and a child together seems like a pretty good thing.

The key point is, if you don't have good mental tools for decoding everyday life in schools, a lot of things might as well be written in Chinese. They won't make sense, and you probably won't pay them much attention. The trouble is, you'll be ignoring the vital clues you need to understand what's going on and what you need to do.

Your prior training has provided concepts to help you understand many day-to-day specifics—individual students, teaching methods, curriculum, budgets, maybe even school law. But you probably have received less help in understanding leadership or in viewing schools as complex systems. University education typically gives short shrift to broadening your vision, sorting out social dynamics in your classroom or school, or working with others. The solution of how to transform schools from the isolating and underrewarding environments they so often become therefore looms as an overwhelming mystery.

The two of us spend much of our time working with people in so-called "leadership positions"—administrative and managerial roles existing in every organization around the world—armies, businesses, hospitals, or governments. The sad truth is that would-be leaders fail more often than they succeed. Because almost no one sets out to flunk the test, we have to ask why so many do. We have repeatedly found that administrators and executives are more successful when they can look at things from more than one angle. The best leaders use multiple frames or lenses, each offering a different perspective on common challenges. The ability to use multiple frames has three advantages: (1) each can be coherent, focused, and powerful; (2) the collection can be more comprehensive than any single one; and (3) only when you have multiple frames can you *reframe*. Reframing is a conscious effort to size up a situation from multiple perspectives and then find a new way to handle it. In times of crisis and overload, you will inevitably feel confused and overwhelmed if you are stuck with only one option.

Think about how to deal with a particularly difficult student or parent. Sometimes, when trapped in an inappropriate approach, you become immobilized, and the student or parent controls the situation. Other times, you may plunge mindlessly forward into reckless and misguided action. You fly off the handle and make things worse. When we don't know what to do, we do more of what we know—we're only digging ourselves into a deeper hole.

We have identified four frames that are commonly used by teachers as well as administrators (Bolman & Deal, 1997):

1. The *political frame* points out the limits of authority and the inevitability that resources are almost always too scarce to fulfill all demands. Schools and classrooms are arenas where individuals and groups jockey for power. Everyone is caught up in this swirling

political vortex. Goals emerge from bargaining and compromise among competing interests rather than from rational analysis. Conflict becomes an inescapable by-product of everyday life. If handled properly, it can be a source of constant energy and renewal.

2. The *human resource* frame is a favorite among teachers and principals. It highlights the importance of individual needs and motives. It assumes that schools and classrooms, as other social systems, work best when needs are satisfied in a caring, trusting work environment. Showing concern for others and providing ample opportunities for participation and shared decision making are among the ways to enlist people's commitment and involvement. Many teachers and principals have found that involving others in shaping decisions gives them a sense of ownership in what happens each day.

3. The *structural frame* emphasizes productivity and posits that classrooms and schools work best when goals and roles are clear and when efforts of individuals and groups are highly coordinated through authority, policies, and rules as well as through more-informal strategies. Holding people accountable for their responsibilities and setting measurable standards are an important part of this rational approach.

4. The *symbolic frame* centers attention on culture, meaning, belief, and faith. Every school or classroom, as does every human group, creates symbols to cultivate commitment, hope, and loyalty. Symbols govern behavior through shared values, informal agreements, and implicit understandings. Stories, metaphors, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and play add zest and existential buoyancy to an enterprise. The school becomes a joyful way of life rather than a sterile or toxic place of work.

In dealing with leadership challenges, most educators rely primarily on the human resource or structural lenses. Yet, many of the situations you face are highly charged politically and emotionally packed symbolically. Even young and inexperienced educators have to use power to get things done and create symbols to anchor meaning and hope. A school or classroom is a jungle and a cathedral as much as it is a family or a production system. If you sometimes feel

that each day spawns an endless series of ambushes and pitfalls, reframing can help.

In our teaching and consulting, we have presented these ideas to thousands of professionals worldwide. As they learn and apply the frames, they regularly notice three things:

1. The frames are powerful, memorable tools.
2. The frames help people see things they once overlooked and come to grips with what is really going on.
3. When individuals reframe, they see new possibilities and become more versatile and effective in their responses.

This book offers the same lessons to principals and teachers. In a series of intimate and intense dialogues between a newcomer and a seasoned veteran, the novice comes to see troublesome situations more clearly, to anticipate trouble before it arises, and to develop more comprehensive and powerful leadership strategies. Join us for a bumpy, exhilarating ride through a year at Pico School. Meet Joan Hilliard, a new teacher who struggles with the same challenges every new teacher confronts. Also get to know her boss, Jaime Rodriguez, a new principal who barely squeaks through his first year. We deliberately made both characters highly committed and talented young professionals who persist in the face of obstacles and learn from their mistakes. Both are blessed with very helpful colleagues (as well as a few daunting opponents). We have all seen plenty of pessimistic accounts of what's wrong with schools. We wanted to provide a more optimistic view—a hopeful image of the possibilities for classroom and school leadership.

## Outline of the Book

Chapter 1, "A New Teacher's First Day," takes Joan Hilliard through her first exciting but troubling day at work. In Chapter 2, "Getting Started on the Right Foot," Hilliard reflects on her interactions with veteran teacher Margaret Juhl regarding the disastrous opening faculty meeting with new principal Jaime Rodriguez. As players get to know each other, they need to go beyond personalities to see new possibilities for building more effective relationships.

Chapter 3, "A New Principal Finds a Wise Friend," brings the rookie principal and a wise veteran, Brenda Connors, together. Connors helps Rodriguez sort through the confusion of his new job to get a better understanding of what is happening and what he can do about it.

In Chapter 4, "The Old Guard and the New Principal," Rodriguez is dismayed to find that his efforts to take charge and set directions are generating far more conflict and opposition than support or appreciation. In Chapter 5, "The Tracking Wars: School Politics at Work," Hilliard and a group of her colleagues become enthusiastic about building the school's commitment to the district's new inclusion policy. They are disappointed by resistance from other teachers. Margaret talks to Joan about political dynamics in schools and explains how to map them to be more effective. In Chapter 6, "Sagging Morale," the appearance of a vicious, anonymous newsletter alerts Rodriguez to significant morale problems among the teachers. Brenda Connors guides him through basic human resource frame issues: individual needs, morale, participation, and empowerment. Chapter 7, "Student Discipline: Who's Really in Charge?" explores often-neglected issues of school structure. When an effort to revise the discipline policy gets hopelessly bogged down, Connors helps Rodriguez see that the process was unintentionally designed for failure. After clarifying goals, roles, and accountability, the school finally develops a policy that works. Chapter 8, "Standards," looks at the standards movement and its impact in the real world of schools and classrooms.

In Chapter 9, "The End of the Year: Symbols and Culture in Schools," Rodriguez wonders why he is still haunted by his predecessor's ghost. Connors helps him understand the symbolic issues of meaning, faith, and culture. Key members of the school's informal network develop a powerful and moving ceremony of celebration and transition, freeing the school to move forward. In Chapter 10, "'I'm Just a Great Teacher!'" Joan wonders why many of her veteran colleagues have lost the spark and spirit that first brought them to teaching. They lament years of low pay, lack of respect, and bureaucratic frustrations. They come to realize that, at a deeper level, they face a crisis of meaning and faith. In developing a celebration of teaching to open the fall term, they reenergize themselves and create a transforming experience for Pico's teaching staff. In Chapter 11, "Teaching and Leading: Finding a Balance," the collapse of Joan's

relationship with her longtime boyfriend, Larry, becomes the catalyst for a schoolwide discussion about how educators can balance commitments to career, family, and private life.

Chapter 12, "A Talk About Values," relates the four frames to ethics and moral leadership. Rodriguez and Connors explore values embedded in each of the frames and discuss the challenges of dealing with the dilemmas that arise from ethical conflicts. Chapter 13, "The Essence of Teaching: Leaving a Legacy," begins when Margaret Juhl is stricken with breast cancer. The entire Pico community rallies. Her bout with mortality leads to a dialogue between Margaret and Joan about the purposes and values underlying teaching as a profession. In Chapter 14, "Passing the Torch," Joan Hilliard confronts tragedy and loss, looks deep within herself, and finds the inner strength to rededicate herself to her calling. The story comes full circle as Hilliard and Rodriguez become mentors for another generation of school leaders.

The dialogues between Hilliard and Juhl and Rodriguez and Connors are much like those we have had many times over the years with fellow educators. Our role is typically to listen and pose questions rather than to provide answers. Good questions help people to see things in new ways and recognize promising leadership opportunities that are there all along. When school leaders can reframe situations, they become more confident and certain. They feel less anxious and overwhelmed. Most important, they are more effective and get things done.

We hope you will find the conversations both lively and informative. We grounded the book in the real world of schools and in the experiences of practicing teachers and administrators. The book offers a return to an old-fashioned approach to learning a craft. The educators in these pages, even the savvy veterans, are far from having all the answers to the mysteries of school leadership. But they are grappling with many of the same questions and issues important to you. Hopefully, you will find yourself identifying and relating their experiences to yours. Even better, you'll be able to think about what you can learn from both their triumphs and their stumbles. In the process, you will probably find new ideas and insights to help with the challenges you face. We hope that the dialogues will stimulate you to think more deeply about yourself and your leadership. Teachers and principals are among America's most important leaders. Ask a random sample of adults to name the most important leader they

have ever known. Many will light up as they remember a caring and gifted teacher or principal who inspired them. Above all, we hope that the book will help you to find new paths to confidence and success, as well as to deepen your contribution to students and others who count on you for guidance and inspiration.

# PART I

# *A Pair of Rookies*

## CHAPTER ONE

# *A New Teacher's First Day*

Joan Hilliard could feel the smile on her face as she stepped from her car. They weren't the best wheels in the country, but they were hers, a token of four years spent working in a brokerage firm. Joan had always wanted to be a teacher, but she had finished college at the wrong time. To her great disappointment, she couldn't land a teaching position. She had still wanted her own classroom but decided that any job was better than nothing. The brokerage firm had paid well, and she felt better for the experience. She had learned about herself, how to work with other adults, and what life at work was all about. Above all, she felt more confident. She had learned to cope in a demanding and stressful environment. That experience had to help in a classroom full of kids.

She was delighted to get a teaching assignment at Pico School. It looked like a friendly place from the outside. The surrounding neighborhood had declined from its earlier glory, but the school had green lawns, well-trimmed shrubbery, and lots of large, lattice-paned windows. Built in the 1940s, the school had much of the architectural charm that Joan remembered from the schools of her childhood. As she walked through the arched entryway, she noticed the vaguely familiar smells of new wax and summer mustiness. As she turned down the corridor leading to the principal's office, she noticed a tall, broad-shouldered man with hands on hips, scrutinizing the sheen on the floor. She guessed correctly that this was the custodian, admiring his work before hundreds of student feet turned it into a mosaic of scuff marks.

As she moved closer, the man looked up and smiled as if he had expected her. "You must be Joan Hilliard. Welcome to Pico. I'm Bill

Hill, the chief custodian. Let me know if I can help you get settled. I'll stop by occasionally to see how you're doing and let you know what's going on."

"Is this the way to the principal's office?" asked Joan, slightly puzzled about what the custodian might have to offer that would be of interest to her.

"Straight ahead, second door on the left," Hill replied. "You were a stockbroker, huh? Not as fancy here. You'll have to buy most of your own supplies. Of course, our kids are a lot different from the adults that you've been working with. They need a lot of discipline, and a lot of caring, too. My own philosophy is that . . ."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Hill. I'm sorry I can't chat longer, but I don't want to be late for my meeting with Mr. Rodriguez."

"Oh, don't worry, he's new, too. I just hope he's as good as our old principal, Mr. Bailey. We worked together for years. Wonderful man. Anyway, you run along. We'll have plenty of time to talk later. It's good to have a new player on our team."

Joan continued down the hall, all the while trying to make sense out of her encounter with Bill Hill. "You'd think he ran the place. He'll probably read what I put on the board before he erases it. At my old job, the custodians never gave advice on how the market was doing."

As she opened the glass door labeled "Principal's Office," Joan's reverie was interrupted by a cheerful voice. "Yoo-hoo, Ms. Hilliard, welcome to Pico!" The voice belonged to a smiling, gray-haired woman wearing a "Pico Pride" T-shirt over a pair of faded blue jeans. "I'm Phyllis Gleason, the school secretary. Mr. Rodriguez got called to the superintendent's office unexpectedly. He'll fill you in on the school and your assignment when he gets back. In the meantime, he asked me to show you around. Would you like a cup of coffee before we start?"

"Sure, why not?"

As Phyllis went off in search of coffee, the door to an office marked "Assistant Principal" opened, and a short, square-shouldered, graying man walked out. He looked at Joan, frowned, and asked, "Who are you?"

Both his tone and crew cut reminded Joan of a Marine drill sergeant. She was surprised at how nervous she felt. "Oh, uh, I'm sorry. I'm Joan Hilliard, and I . . ."

"Oh, yeah!" the man interrupted, with the commanding tone of someone who expected to be listened to. "I heard about you. No teaching experience. Just what we need. You sure as hell didn't learn

anything about classroom control from a bunch of stockbrokers. Most of them don't even know anything about the market, much less about handling kids." With that, he marched forcefully out of the office just as Phyllis returned with the coffee.

Joan must have looked as crestfallen as she felt, because Phyllis seemed to understand immediately what had happened. "Oh, you met Mr. Shepherd."

"I didn't exactly meet him," Joan replied. "He didn't bother to tell me who he is. Is he always so, um . . .?" Joan paused, looking for a discreet way to phrase her question.

"Gruff? Oh, don't take it personally. His bark is worse than his bite. He's the same with everyone."

"He's the assistant principal?"

"Yes, been here 10 years. Some people thought he might be the next principal. But the superintendent felt that Mr. Shepherd should do what he does best. He's *awfully* strong on discipline."

Did Phyllis intend praise or veiled criticism of the assistant principal? Joan wasn't sure. She decided not to press the issue. She wondered if the principal would be as abrupt as Sam Shepherd. She was disappointed to find that the secretary was taking charge of her orientation. As Phyllis started to lead her around the building, Joan wondered if the tour would simply be a time filler. But her doubts gradually turned to awe and admiration. Phyllis seemed to know everything and shared it all in loving detail, as if she had witnessed everything firsthand. With unflagging enthusiasm, Gleason introduced Joan to everyone they encountered, and Joan was impressed with the warmth of the responses. Joan was even more amazed by Gleason's ability to field questions on just about everything—schedules, materials, children, parents—you name it.

"They treat her like the school oracle—knows all, tells all, whatever she says is the way it is," thought Joan to herself. "Maybe Phyllis is really in charge around here." It was only as they neared the end of the tour that Joan realized how much of her own background and ideas about teaching she had shared with Phyllis. "She seems as interested in my thoughts about teaching as Bill Hill did," mused Joan.

Phyllis stopped in front of a door with an opaque window marked 208. She took Joan inside a spacious classroom and said, "This is your room this year. What do you think? Maybe it's a little plain compared to what you're used to. But within these four walls, you're the boss."

"It's great! Lots of windows and plenty of wall space and bookshelves. The walls are a little bare, but we'll take care of that in

no time." Joan's mind was flooded with a thousand thoughts. She had waited a long time for this moment. She tried to imagine the empty desks filled with students. Her students. Her classroom.

Phyllis waited for a few moments while Joan took it all in. "I'll leave you alone for a while to think about what else you'll need. Whatever it is, I'll try to get it for you."

"Thanks, Phyllis," said Joan. Then a question occurred to her. "Who had this room before me?"

"Oh, well, him," Phyllis replied. "He didn't stay long. Nice young man. Smart, too. But he had a little trouble with discipline. The noise and the fights were the biggest problem. It *was* entertaining to walk by his classroom. Never a dull moment. But don't let that worry you. I'm sure you'll be different. Just remember not to smile before December. And anything you need to know, come to me." Phyllis smiled once again and started back to the principal's office, turning her head only to acknowledge Joan's "Thank you."

After her rescheduled meeting with Jaime Rodriguez, Joan mulled over her morning's encounters. Nothing was quite what she had expected. Why did the secretary and the custodian loom so large in the affairs of the school? How many people would be looking over her shoulder and giving her advice on how to teach? She thought about raising her concerns with Jaime Rodriguez but thought better of it. He seemed friendly and genuinely pleased that she was joining the Pico faculty, but she didn't want to sound like an idiot. Still, the two had formed an almost instant bond as they realized what they shared—both were new and nervous. Joan could hardly believe her luck in finding a principal who seemed so supportive and easy to work with.

The day's thoughts were still spinning in Joan's mind as she walked to her car for the drive home. Just as she was opening the front door of her car, she heard someone calling her name. She turned her head and saw a group of teachers chatting in the parking lot. One of them, a male who fit Joan's stereotype of a veteran football coach, came over. "Joan Hilliard?" he said as he walked over and offered his hand. "I'm Phil Leckney. My classroom is just down the hall from yours. Welcome to Pico. Some of us are headed over to Andy's Café. Would you like to join us?"

Joan felt torn. She had promised to meet her boyfriend, Larry, in half an hour. After hesitating, she replied, "Well, I can stay for only a little while, but I'd love to."

The conversation at Andy's reinforced Joan's feeling that she had come to the right school. Her new colleagues laughed heartily when she told of her encounters with Bill Hill and Phyllis Gleason.

"To understand Bill," Margaret Juhl responded, "come in some morning at 7:30 and go to the cafeteria. You'll see the free breakfast kids. And you'll see that Bill is a big brother for just about everyone in the room. He knows all the students and a lot of the parents, too. Bill grew up a few blocks from here. He probably knows more people in the neighborhood than anyone else at Pico."

"Well, it might be a draw between him and Phyllis," Phil Leckney chimed in.

"True," said Margaret. "She's sort of a combination of Dear Abby, Diane Sawyer, and General Patton. The key thing to remember is the line from the old song, 'You can get anything you want, at Phyllis's restaurant.' "

Joan joined everyone else's laughter. As the group quieted down, Joan was caught off guard by a question from Vivian Chu. Chu, another veteran, had not said much until she turned to Joan to ask, "You met with Mr. Rodriguez today, didn't you? How did it go?" Joan felt every eye at the table turn to her. It dawned on her that her colleagues were as curious as she was about Pico's new principal.

As Phil Leckney put it, "He's an unknown. Phil Bailey was a great guy. Not Mr. Superprincipal, maybe, but he was pretty supportive, and he let us teach. New principals are all alike. They want to save the world and change everything. They don't understand the idea that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. How hard will it be to break this guy in?"

No one seemed to know the answer. The consensus was that they would learn a lot more the next day at the opening faculty meeting of the new school year. Then the conversation shifted to Joan's experience in the business world. Her colleagues peppered her with questions about what she did, what it was like, and, to her embarrassment, how much money she made. It almost felt as if they wished they had tasted another career themselves to find out if the grass was greener somewhere else. The conversation at Andy's was so engrossing that Joan was startled to look at her watch and notice that she was a half hour late to meet Larry. Bidding her colleagues a hasty farewell, she rushed off. On balance, she felt, it had been a great day. She just hoped that Larry was not too miffed that she was late.

## CHAPTER TWO

# *Getting Started on the Right Foot*

"So, when are you going to be through today?"

The edge in Larry's voice was jarring. He was still in bed, and Joan was just putting the final touches on her teaching costume.

"I'm not sure, Larry," she said carefully. "Margaret and I are meeting with the principal to talk about his opening sermon. You remember, I told you about it."

"Oh, yeah. Rodriguez did his vision thing, and Margaret cut him off at the knees."

"Well, not quite," said Joan, as she thought back a few days to the first faculty meeting of the new school year. She remembered it vividly. She knew that Rodriguez had wanted to get off on the right foot as much as she did. She had entered the first faculty meeting with optimism and excitement. After a few preliminaries, Rodriguez began to speak about his vision for the school. Joan had initially felt excited about his image of a child-centered school in which all students were expected to succeed and to achieve at their full potential. In her previous job, there had never seemed to be any real sense of mission beyond making money.

Rodriguez had seemed tense, but he delivered his message with conviction, even fervor. Joan soon realized, however, that many of her colleagues didn't share her excitement. Some looked bored; others appeared openly resistant. A few rows behind her, she could hear Phil Leckney making snide comments to those nearby.

When Rodriguez finished, he asked for questions. At first, none came. The silence was oppressive. Joan could not remember when she had felt more tension in a room. The stony silence broke only when Margaret Juhl asked, "Shouldn't you get to know this school and how we do things before you preach about how we should teach?"

Joan was startled by Margaret's bluntness and felt pained when she glanced at Jaime Rodriguez. He looked stunned, almost frozen in place. Joan wished she had the courage to go over and give him a hug. "He looks like he needs help," she thought to herself in the seconds before another young teacher, Carlos Cortez, leapt to his feet and spoke with obvious anger in his voice.

"The man just got here and you people don't want to give him a chance. Mr. Rodriguez is saying things someone has needed to say for a long time. I'm getting pretty tired of people who think this school is so perfect that we can't improve." Cortez's outburst triggered a series of sharply worded exchanges between older and younger teachers. Joan began to wonder what she had got herself into. She had never seen anything like this in her old firm. The climate there had been competitive, even cutthroat, but people never went for the jugular. She was relieved when Rodriguez quickly moved to adjourn the meeting.

After the meeting, Joan asked Margaret Juhl to explain what had happened.

"Well," said Juhl, "I'm still sorting it out myself. Jaime is probably feeling a little shell-shocked, wondering what hit him. And he may be pretty angry at me."

"Aren't you worried about that?" Joan asked.

"Only if he stays angry. He could make life difficult for me if he wanted to," Margaret replied.

"Do you think maybe you should apologize, or something?" Joan asked.

"Of course not. He may not know it yet," said Margaret with a smile, "but I was doing him a favor."

"That was a favor?" Joan asked incredulously.

"You were there. You saw all those stony faces. He meant well, but his speech flopped. He didn't have a clue about what was going wrong. It may take a little while, but I hope he'll realize that I was telling him what he needed to hear—why the teachers didn't like his opening salvo."

"But, what if he doesn't listen?" asked Joan.

"We'll know soon," answered Margaret. "He called me and asked for a meeting."

"And what about Carlos?" Joan looked worried.

"I'll talk to Carlos. He may think I'm leading a charge to undermine the district's first Hispanic principal. The truth is, I want Jaime to succeed as much as Carlos does. If you really want to torpedo an administrator, you don't do it with a frontal assault. It's safer and more effective to kill them softly behind the scenes. Silent resistance and passive aggression are deadly. You may have seen it happen in your last job. Rodriguez was digging himself into a hole. Someone had to tell him. And remind him about the first law of holes."

"What's the first law of holes?"

"When you're in one, stop digging!" said Margaret with a laugh. "Anyway, if I talk to Carlos one-on-one about how we can help the new principal succeed, I think we can have a meeting of the minds."

"I don't know," said Joan skeptically. "He seemed pretty upset."

"Joan, when I was younger, I used to pussyfoot around disagreement and conflict. I was afraid of getting people angry or upset. But I slowly realized I was just sweeping things under the rug until the lumps got so big we tripped over them. Teaching is not an exact science. We're not always going to agree with one another. And if we're at loggerheads about things we care about, how in the world can we talk about our disagreements without having anyone feel anything?"

"Maybe that's why everyone's trying to ignore the tensions between the Latino and Anglo teachers?" asked Joan.

"Exactly. People are hoping that if we ignore it, it will go away. But we know it won't. In the meantime, we hurt the kids as much as we hurt each other. The same thing happens with all the other conflicts we try to brush aside. They pile up and then blow up. That's not my idea of a healthy school. How can you deal with anything if you can't talk about it? In the long run, it's more productive to get things out in the open."

"Just the same, you really left Jaime hanging," said Joan. "He looked crushed after you went after him."

"I know—it was painful for both of us. But the one thing worse than hearing something straight is getting no feedback at all. If you looked around the room, you saw crossed arms and people rolling their eyes. It wasn't even subtle. There were a lot of unhappy folks

in that audience. If that stays hidden, teachers think their new principal is a jerk, but he doesn't know it. Down the road, he notices that the teachers are resisting everything he's doing. So he blames us, and we blame him. We think he's a tyrant, and he thinks we're dinosaurs."

"So everyone blames someone else, and the school gets stuck. But why did you convene a meeting at Andy's Café without Jaime? Weren't you being less than open yourself?" asked Joan.

"I knew teachers needed to talk about what happened. When I spoke up, I was speaking for a lot of other people. You remember the conversation at Andy's?"

"Hard to forget. Venting, criticism, anger. But after a while the tone started to shift. You could see some teachers almost starting to feel sympathy for Jaime."

"Exactly," said Margaret.

"Were you nudging the conversation in that direction?"

Margaret smiled broadly. "Sure I was. I could do that because people trust me. They saw me stand up to Jaime, and I've stood up for teachers before. By the end of the evening, people were a little more willing to give him another chance. That's what I hoped for."

"But I still feel bad for him," said Joan. "He's new like me. I don't know if I could handle being picked apart like that in public. It's bad enough that my boyfriend criticizes everything I cook. The first few days with my class, I've done more things wrong than right. If someone aired my dirty laundry in public, I'm not sure I could take it."

Margaret's face softened. Her voice was warm and gentle. "I know. Jaime may feel the same way. I remember how much support I needed as a new teacher. But I also needed someone to level with me when I was screwing up. Do you want to keep feeding Larry stuff he hates? If I have suggestions for your teaching, do you want to hear them?"

"If you can help me teach better, maybe I could even tolerate public humiliation. But I'd still feel lousy. I'll bet Jaime is pretty upset."

"Sure, he is. Building an open relationship takes more than firing a beginning salvo. You have to follow up. That's what I'm planning next."

As Joan took her last sip of coffee, Larry interrupted her long reverie. "Earth to Joan! Earth to Joan! You've been staring at the coffee pot for the last five minutes. I thought you were bringing me a cup."

"I'm sorry, honey. I guess I was still thinking about the school. Anyway, I'm sure the meeting today can't last beyond 5 o'clock. How about pizza? My treat?"

"Sounds great, only if the pizza isn't topped with pepperoni *and* Pico."

"I promise," said Joan laughing. There were still moments when Larry was as delightful as she remembered him in graduate school. But he had seemed more supportive of her career when they were both in the same business. Now that she was teaching, he seemed to expect that *her* workday should last from the time *he* left in the morning until *he* got home at night. Joan couldn't help wondering if they would ever make it over the long haul.

## CHAPTER THREE

# *A New Principal Finds a Wise Friend*

As Jaime Rodriguez looked from his office into the empty school yard, he mulled over his first days as principal of Pico. It had been much rockier than he'd expected. He'd hoped to impress his faculty with his dedication and vision, but he was all too aware that he had missed the mark. He was grateful for one thing. He'd found a coach just when he was going under for the third time. He had run into Brenda Connors as the two of them were leaving a meeting at the district office. Connors asked him how it was going. Rodriguez hesitated, trying to figure out whether she really wanted to know. But he'd been impressed with her during the meeting. She seemed to be the kind of principal he hoped to become: caring, confident, professional, wise, and sensitive.

Avoiding the temptation to give a pat answer, he asked, "Do you want the truth?"

"Nothing but."

Jaime hesitated, but finally decided to plunge in. "To tell you the truth, if I didn't have a new house and a big mortgage, I might pack it in."

Connors's response was warm and direct. "That's about how I felt. Almost 20 years ago, but still seems like yesterday. How about a cup of coffee?"

"How about something a little stronger?"

"I think I know just the place," Connors said with a knowing smile.

Once they found a comfortable table and ordered drinks, Connors opened the conversation. "I asked how things were going because I still remember my first week on the job. I thought no one could be so scared and confused and still survive. Everything was blowing up in my face. Angry teachers. School in chaos. I felt pretty hopeless as a leader. But then I got a gift. The assistant superintendent then was a grizzled old character named Harold Sawyer. Everyone called him "Buzz." He was a couple of years from retirement. He scared me at first. He seemed so demanding and impatient. I was afraid he was dumbfounded that a principalship could go to someone with so little talent.

"At the end of the first week, he dropped by my office. I froze. I was afraid he'd come to tell me to pack up my desk and get out before I did any more damage. I was petrified. But I'll never forget his words. 'You know,' he said, 'This used to be my office. I was principal here for 12 years. The first couple, I didn't have a clue what in hell I was doing. If the staff hadn't carried me along, the parents would have ridden me out of town on a rail. You'll probably learn quicker than I did. But being a new principal is a lot like flying in a fog with no radar. If you're interested, I could give you a few tips.'"

"I'd have hugged that man if I weren't so afraid of him. It turned out he really meant it. He was the life preserver that got me through the first year. He became one of my best friends. Even after he retired, we kept in touch . . ." She paused and lowered her head. ". . . until he died a couple of years ago."

Rodriguez thought he saw a trace of tears in her eyes.

"I miss him. Anyway, Jaime, if you'd like someone to talk to, I'm volunteering."

"If you're offering a life preserver, I need it. But it's hard to believe your first year was that rough."

Connors smiled. "In a few years, I'll bet a young principal tells you the same thing."

Rodriguez mulled over that first conversation with a smile. Connors's warmth and insights had been of much more value than the drink. She encouraged him as he tried to explain why his first days had been so unsettling. What surprised him most was that she could make sense out of things that he couldn't figure out.

When he had entered the Pico principalship, Rodriguez wanted to take charge and set high standards for both staff and students. He was counting on his interpersonal skills to win people over. He'd always been good at building relationships, even with those who saw

things differently. He felt he could do the job at least as well as other principals he had known. Above all, he felt excited about the contribution he hoped to make. Schools were under fire, and Rodriguez wanted Pico to set an example of what was possible.

But that was before his first faculty meeting. When he entered the meeting room minutes before the official starting time, he was disappointed to find no one there. His discouragement grew as teachers slowly drifted in. He was particularly offended by some who registered hopes that the meeting wouldn't last very long.

Rodriguez opened the meeting by talking about his vision. He'd done his homework—hours of it. He shared his dreams of a child-centered school that set high standards for all students. But he was discouraged to notice many teachers frowning or crossing their arms. Some were staring out the window or at papers in front of them. After he finished, he asked for questions. A long silence ensued. Then Margaret Juhl hit him with her question. Rodriguez was stunned. He'd been expecting praise and enthusiasm, not a frontal attack. It had never occurred to him to have a Plan B. He was caught flat-footed and helpless. Before he regained his balance, a small war broke out between his critics and defenders. Fearing things were getting out of hand, he'd moved quickly to adjourn the meeting. He left feeling like a failure.

The next day, he got another surprise when the superintendent called him promptly at 8 A.M. "Jaime," he said, "You've got good ideas—raising standards, a child-centered school. I'm 100% behind you. But you have to be careful not to move so fast that you get the faculty upset."

"Welcome to the big leagues," he thought to himself. "How did word get to the superintendent that fast? What's going on here?" Only later did he learn about the informal gathering at Andy's following the faculty meeting. It was clear he had not been on the guest list. Presiding at that meeting was Margaret Juhl. Jaime knew she was a 22-year veteran of the Pico faculty. He'd heard that most of the senior teachers respected her, and many parents revered her. She had also served for a number of years as the representative of the teachers' union.

He knew he'd got off on the wrong foot. But how? Where had he gone wrong? His discomfort increased over the next several days with a steady stream of reminders from teachers about his predecessor, Phil Bailey. He got tired of hearing, "That's not how Mr. Bailey would have done it." He began to wonder who was running the school—him or Phil Bailey's ghost.

As he poured all this out in the first conversation with Brenda, she listened attentively, occasionally offering a comment or question. The more they talked, the better Rodriguez felt. Things started to make more sense. She could see things in ways that he couldn't. She helped him see the difference between power and authority. She explained that new leaders always undergo some form of initiation ritual or "hazing." She reminded him that people need time to adapt to change and reassured him that comparisons to Phil Bailey were a normal part of transition, not a sign that Jaime would never be accepted.

Rodriguez remembered asking Brenda at the end of their conversation if they could meet again. "I got a lot of help when I was a new principal," she had replied. "I owe it to Buzz to return the favor."

That night, Rodriguez slept better than he had in weeks.

# *Leadership Lessons*

## Seeing and Solving Barriers to Entry

Like other new educators, Joan Hilliard and Jaime Rodriguez arrived at Pico School brimming with hope and enthusiasm. Starting a new job or a new career is one of life's great moments. The road ahead promises adventure, opportunity, and independence. Long-delayed dreams can finally be realized. Everything seems possible. Bumps? Obstacles? Who wants to think about problems when the world is brimming with possibilities? Yet there are always land mines lurking just below the surface. Too often, we discover them only when they blow up in our face. Enthusiasm and optimism can quickly erode into a mire of disappointment and disillusion.

Newcomers will always encounter bumps on the road. Joan's and Jaime's experiences offer guidelines for spotting and dealing with pitfalls with the least amount of wear and tear.

*Expect to be tested.* When you enter someplace new, you're busy trying to find your way, whereas the natives are actively trying to figure you out. They want to know what you are bringing to the school. Will you fit in? Might you be a troublemaker? A threat? Joan Hilliard was tested multiple times in her first few hours at Pico. The custodian, Bill Hill, tested her flexibility and receptivity when he told her he'd be stopping by to see how she was doing. Sam Shepherd, the assistant principal, tested her resilience and self-confidence with his challenging and chilly greetings. Joan could easily have responded in ways that caused her new colleagues to see her as difficult and rigid or, conversely, as weak and easy to manipulate. Pay attention to these tests. They're important clues about

people's expectations and about yardsticks they use to evaluate one another.

*Study cultural clues.* As soon as Joan walked into Pico School, she began to notice clues about how the school worked. Many of them were surprises. Joan wisely paid attention to what she was finding—and tried not to take too much for granted.

When you walk through the front door of any school, it will speak if you watch and listen. What do you notice when you enter the building? How does the place look? How does it smell? Joan noticed the clean floors, the smell of fresh wax, and the custodian appraising his work. What sounds, if any, strike you? Walk around to get the lay of the landscape. Notice artifacts—banners, photos, trophy cases. Is there a sign that says, "Welcome"? Or merely one that says, "All visitors must report immediately to the principal's office"? What's on the walls? Photos of students? Random graffiti? Notice what people wear. Is the principal in a dark suit? Or an aloha shirt? Pay particular attention to how people greet you. Joan's frosty encounter with the assistant principal was offset by warm welcomes from Bill Hill and Phyllis Gleason.

If you pay attention, your observations will yield thousands of clues to penetrate fog-shrouded cultural practices. But there's more you can do. When you're new, finding your way around will be a lot easier if you get some help from local guides.

*Find guides: mentors, priests, and storytellers.* There's a cast of characters in every workplace who can be recruited as mentors and guides. Locate informal priests or priestesses. You won't always find them in a big corner office. They may be typing away in a small cubicle, like Phyllis Gleason, or polishing floors, like Bill Hill. They're often old-timers who came in with the furniture. They can tell you how things came to be and instruct you in cultural mores and norms. Be reverent, pay attention, and you'll find a storehouse of knowledge and wisdom. You can also make friends whose counsel and support could be a big help somewhere down the line.

Look, too, for storytellers—individuals like Phyllis who dramatize everyday exploits and perpetuate school lore. Listen to their tales and read between the lines. Phyllis Gleason's casual comment about Joan's predecessor, who couldn't control his class, was a gentle warning about possible trouble ahead. You'll get important

lessons on how to get ahead and what to avoid. You'll hear things you'd almost never find in policy manuals. Stories make lessons real and memorable. Even though unofficial, the lessons are often right on. They will often tell you about heroes and heroines—the living logos who exemplify what the organization stands for. At Pico, Phil Bailey, the former principal, and Margaret Juhl, the veteran teacher, both exemplify this role.

On the other hand, you might find that the heroes in your school are folks who toe the line and kiss up. If that's what gets rewarded, but it's not your style, you've learned an important lesson. Maybe you're in the wrong place.

*Connect with grapevine gossips.* Gossips are always privy to the latest scoop—even things that are supposed to be confidential or hush-hush. Hear them out, and you'll often get the best briefing going. Their accuracy isn't perfect, but they're reliable informants about current issues, concerns, hopes, and fears. If you hear a story about how the principal was upbraided by the superintendent in a hallway conversation, the details may be distorted, but you can be pretty sure something interesting is afoot. Rumors of impending layoffs may be exaggerated, but you'd be wise to prepare for rough seas. However, gossip is a two-way street. You have to give in order to receive. Don't be too cautious about divulging a few things yourself. Chances are the truth will be less harmful than what the gossips make up on their own. A few minutes over coffee with your local gossip is often worth more than a multitude of meetings and memos. Information is power. Being up to date and in the loop gives you a real advantage over people who rely solely on the official channels to keep on top of things. And if there are things you'd like people to be talking about, there's no better place than the grapevine to get the word out.

# PART II

# *The Political Frame*

## Chapter Four

# *The Old Guard and the New Principal*

The morning after his meeting with Brenda Connors, Rodriguez found himself still mulling over their conversation. He particularly remembered Connors's advice about school politics. At first, he had protested, "I don't want politics in my school. A principal shouldn't have to be a politician."

Connors had not challenged him directly. She simply asked, "What do you make of the superintendent's phone call?"

"It's a puzzle. I've got some clues but I don't know how to put them together."

"Who might have a pipeline to the superintendent?" she asked.

"I wish I knew."

"Well, let's try to scope Pico's political terrain. Who are the influential people who might not be on your side?"

Rodriguez was embarrassed to realize that he had not thought much about potential opposition. He paused before responding. "Well, there's Sam Shepherd, the assistant principal. He was passed over for my position. He still thinks he's the right man for the job. He knows how to crack the whip, but he's more like a warden than a school leader. Most of the black and Latino parents feel he doesn't respect them or their kids."

"Who else?" Brenda asked.

"There's Margaret Juhl. She's a veteran. Teachers and parents respect her. She nailed me at the first faculty meeting. After I talked about my vision for the school, she pretty much told me I had no

right to tell teachers how to teach. It felt like a slap in the face. The room got very tense."

Brenda nodded understandingly. "I know Margaret. She definitely has a mind of her own, and she's not shy about telling you what's on it. But she's a pro. Spend some time with her. She could be an asset and an ally."

Jaime groaned. "Do you think I'm a glutton for pain?"

Brenda smiled. "No. But Margaret's a very important player. Do you know what Lyndon Johnson said about people like that?"

"No, what?"

"It's a lot better to have them inside the tent peeing out, than outside the tent peeing in."

They both laughed.

"O.K. I've got your point. I'll talk to Margaret."

Then she asked, "So far, you've focused only on the professional staff. Are there other influential players?"

Rodriguez thought for a minute. "There's Bill Hill, the custodian. People say he's the eyes and ears of the school. Seems to know just about everything that goes on. He's not bashful about sharing it. Then there's the secretary, Phyllis Gleason. I think she came in with the furniture. She probably knows more than I'll ever know about the school. I really need her. But I don't get the feeling she's delighted having me as her new boss."

He stopped, and frowned. "The more I think about it, the worse it seems. I'm new. I got off on the wrong foot. And I have a lot of opposition."

"Who are your allies?"

Rodriguez hesitated for a moment. "Beats me."

"What about your younger staff?"

"Well, some of them are pretty frustrated. They think the school's too conservative, that it doesn't really respond to kids. There are three Latino teachers in the school, and I know they were glad to see me get the job. One of them, Carlos Cortez, came to my defense after Margaret Juhl jumped me. He tells me that the Latino teachers resented Phil Bailey for never doing anything to celebrate Cinco de Mayo."

"What's your relationship like so far with Phyllis?" Connors inquired.

"I think she's still comparing me to Phil," Rodriguez responded, "but the assistant superintendent says that she loves the school and is absolutely loyal."

"Talk to Phyllis and Bill. When you've got a mystery, you need some clues. They might be able to help you get a better picture of what's going on. And what you might need to do next."

"What do you mean?"

"One of the things they never teach in graduate school is how to map the political terrain. My first year as a principal, we had *big* budget cuts. Talk about a jungle! When there's a drought and the water hole starts to dry up, the animals get desperate. I realized that I had to figure out who the key players were. I had to know what they wanted and how much power they had. So I went around and talked to some people and asked questions. Then, I actually drew a map on a piece of paper. On the right side, I put the real conservatives, the people who were probably going to resist almost any change I came up with. On the left, I put the people who I was pretty sure I could count on. Then, in the middle, I put the folks who were neutral and might go either way. There were a lot of fence-sitters, and that told me something right away."

"They were the swing voters?" Jaime asked.

"Exactly. As I put folks on the map, I put them higher or lower, depending on how much power I thought they had. Then I thought about how we could negotiate, instead of going to war. When a new principal comes in, all the unresolved issues get opened up. The different interest groups are all jockeying to hold on to what they have and see if they can get more."

Rodriguez felt uncomfortable with all the talk of power and politics. He liked to think that he was an educator, not a politician. But Connors made sense. "So, you're saying I need to figure out who's with me and who's against me. I need to draw my own map. I'll talk to Phyllis and Bill tomorrow."

While shaving the next morning, Rodriguez began to rethink his situation. Before arriving at Pico, he had images of leading a motivated and harmonious faculty. Seeking help from the secretary and the custodian had not been in his official game plan. But it was beginning to look as if he needed them more than vice versa. They might be able to point out barriers and gateways on Pico's political road map. He felt both excited and apprehensive about his new course.

His apprehension dissipated quickly in the first few minutes of his meeting with Phyllis Gleason. She agreed to meet as soon as he asked, though with little apparent enthusiasm. Rodriguez felt awkward at the beginning, but after a few pleasantries he got right to the point. "Phyllis, how long have you been at Pico?"

She responded instantly. "It'll be 26 years next March."

"So you've had plenty of opportunities to learn how things work here."

"Yes, I have."

"Could you teach me?"

Gleason smiled broadly. "I'm glad you asked. You know, Phil Bailey asked me the same question when he was new. The first thing to understand is that, except for some young teachers, this place has been pretty stable. Most of the old-timers have been together for years. They're friends. They stick together, particularly when threatened by an outsider."

"Like me?" asked Jaime.

"Like you. You jumped into a sermon about high standards and children as if the old-timers had never thought about those things. In their minds, that's exactly what they've been doing for years."

Jaime squirmed as he realized the errors of his opening speech. He listened carefully as Phyllis Gleason shared her years of experience. Things started to fall into place. Gleason helped by pointing out that Rodriguez had things in common with some teachers. He and Margaret Juhl had graduated from the same teachers' college, albeit at different times. Sam Shepherd and Rodriguez were both Rotarians. Many of the black and Hispanic teachers had been waiting for a long time for someone to champion concerns about better instruction for students of color.

Later that morning, in the maintenance office, Bill Hill confirmed much of what Gleason had told him. He added more. Hill had grown up in the local community. He knew most parents and community leaders. His friends were on the school board. He knew most students by name. He was in the cafeteria every morning. He befriended "free breakfast" students and served as a big brother for many of them. Rodriguez could see Hill's love for the school went well beyond his official duties as custodian. At the meeting's end, Hill gave Rodriguez the names of two parents who, he said, would be more than willing to host an informal coffee hour to help Rodriguez get better acquainted.

As Rodriguez mulled over the morning, he was surprised at how productive it had been. He had not anticipated how important Gleason and Hill were or how much they would appreciate being recognized and valued. Both were delighted to feel they had something to teach their new principal. Rodriguez felt a little less

overwhelmed. He felt he had made two allies. He even looked forward to reaching out to others who might not be so receptive. He focused on Margaret Juhl. She could be a big help as an ally or an endless pain as an enemy. He knew he had to reach out.

At their breakfast meeting a few days later, Rodriguez arrived feeling tense. Juhl's abrupt opening did not help.

"So, what's on your mind?" she asked. Her tone seemed brusque.

"Well . . . ," he said, grasping for the right words. "You've been at Pico a long time and are highly respected. I thought you might be able to give me some lessons—teach me a few things."

"Look, I'm close to retirement, breaking in a rookie principal is a lot of work. But I'll give you one clue. Phil Bailey had confidence in his staff. He let us teach. He did not blunder in with sermons insulting our professionalism."

Rodriguez's first impulse was to snap back or to look for a way to speed up her retirement. But he recalled his counsel from Brenda Connors. "Very few school leaders know how important it is to learn how to facilitate your opposition. Otherwise, your opponents agree to your face then stab you when your back is turned." Rodriguez figured this might be a good time to take her advice to heart.

"Insulting teachers is the last thing I intended," he said, speaking slowly. "I know how important all of you are. I want us to work together to improve things."

"Why not get to know what we're already doing before telling us how to do it better? Did you think they dropped you into a disaster area waiting for a messiah to ride in and fix things?"

Rodriguez winced. He tried again. "Of course not. Pico is a great school. I'm lucky to be here. I hear you—people felt I was talking down to them. I don't have all the answers. That's why I wanted to meet with you. I need your help. Nor just for my sake, but for the sake of our school and kids. Everyone tells me how much you care. If we agree on that, I know we can work together."

Margaret looked at him for a long time. She finally responded. "You're right, I do care about this school. The question for me is whether your deeds are going to match your words. If they do, I'm willing to give you a chance."

As the discussion continued, the climate was still strained. But Rodriguez continued to listen and probe Margaret's views of where the school had been and where it needed to go. Eventually, they revisited Jaime's speech at the opening faculty meeting.

"I guess I was so eager, I jumped the gun," Jaime said. "I hadn't thought enough about how others might feel. Pico has a lot of experienced teachers. I'm sure they believe they're doing a good job. I'm the new kid on the block. They have a lot to teach me. I should have said that. I'll admit, your question floored me. But maybe you were just giving me a dose of my own medicine."

"I wasn't trying to make you look bad," said Margaret. "I was trying to warn that you were in danger of driving off a cliff!"

"That's clearer to me now. It's also becoming obvious that I'm better off with people who tell me the truth. It would be worse to have people talk behind my back or stick it to me when I'm not looking. Thanks, Margaret. To be honest, I didn't expect this kind of conversation with the teachers' union rep."

"Well, I'm not wearing that hat right now. I want a cooperative relationship wherever it's possible. I *will* fight as hard as necessary to represent the teachers when I'm wearing my union rep hat. In either case, I'll be straight with you."

Juhl confirmed her promise a few days later when she called to give Rodriguez a gentle warning about Sam Shepherd. She even offered hints for how Rodriguez might approach his assistant principal. Though she never said it explicitly, Rodriguez sensed that she saw Shepherd as a negative force. "Are you aware," she asked casually, "that he's only two years from retirement?"

A meeting with Sam Shepherd a day later ended when Shepherd walked out of the meeting. Shepherd had not said much, until Rodriguez asked for his support. Then he snarled that he wanted no part of turning a well-run school over to the inmates.

As the door slammed, Rodriguez realized he had to act. Everyone would be better off if Shepherd moved on. Before his next meeting, Rodriguez did his homework. He touched base with Phyllis Gleason and Bill Hill to learn as much as he could about Shepherd. At an informal meeting, he listened to parents' complaints about Shepherd's rigid and authoritarian treatment of students. Even more important, he had another long talk with Margaret Juhl about Shepherd's personal agenda. A week later, when he walked into their second meeting, Rodriguez got right to the point. "I know you don't like me very much."

"You said it, I didn't," Shepherd muttered.

"I also understand that you don't think the school is big enough for both of us," Rodriguez continued. "I agree, and so does the

superintendent. We want to offer you some options. I have a memo for you that lays out two of them. Option one is that you move to Hillview as assistant principal. It's your neighborhood, and you might find the principal and kids there more to your liking. You might like the other option even more. The district is willing to offer an early retirement package. I hear you've wanted to run a hunting camp for a long time. This might provide the down payment."

Shepherd looked stunned. He mumbled, "I've got to think about it," and walked out, this time without slamming the door. The next day, his letter of resignation was on Rodriguez's desk.

Connors had been right, Rodriguez thought to himself. You need to map the political terrain before making your moves. A person's position on the organizational chart may not tell how much they know or how much influence they wield. He thought back to something he'd read in graduate school about sources of power, and it suddenly made sense. Some people at Pico, like Phyllis Gleason, had power because of their information and know-how. Others, like Bill Hill, were influential because of their friends and allies. Sam Shepherd was powerful because of his control of rewards and his ability to coerce. Phil Bailey still had lingering personal power based on memories of his genial warmth. Rodriguez himself had the authority built into the principal's role, but that wasn't really enough to do the job. His know-how as a principal was unproven, and he was just beginning to build his own alliances. He had the potential for substantial power as a result of his influence over agendas and symbols. But his first effort to put them into action in his vision speech had flopped. He now had a much clearer sense of what had happened and what he needed to do next.

By going out and talking to people, asking questions, and listening, he was able to discover areas of shared interest that made it much easier to work with most of the people in the school. Building coalitions had turned out not to be as hard as it seemed at first. But sometimes, as with Shepherd, it was necessary to take decisive steps. The key was to do it in a way that did not create a martyr or a victim around whom others would rally.

Rodriguez looked forward to his next weekly visit with Brenda Connors. For a change, he had a triumph to report. Her congratulations felt much better than the condolences she had given him in their previous consultation. His exhilaration was tempered, though, when Connors told him to remember that winning a battle was not

the same as winning the war. He felt she was probably right but wondered what she meant. When he asked her, she smiled and said, "Let's wait and see how things go from here. But remember, a school and a kindergarten classroom have a lot in common. Like an ocean, you never turn your back on them."

## Chapter Five

# *The Tracking Wars*

## School Politics at Work

Joan was almost at the end of her rope. There could not have been a worse day for Roscoe, a teacher's worst nightmare, to act out. As usual, he had managed to draw his sidekick, Armando, into his latest mischief. The pair were artists at ruining a teacher's afternoon. Joan had tried just about everything short of wringing both of their necks, with little success. Nothing she had learned in college or business had prepared her for this. Her classroom was reasonably orderly most of the time. Right now it was careening straight toward chaos.

Joan wondered if she would have enough energy to finish planning tomorrow's lessons and meet Larry for dinner later that evening. She was only two weeks into the term, and school was already spilling over too much into their relationship. Evenings were becoming another vexing challenge instead of a warm and welcome escape. At her last job, the workday started early but always ended in time for dinner, and she rarely took work home. Just as she was asking herself whether a long run or an after-school glass of wine would be more therapeutic, she was heartened when Margaret Juhl walked into her classroom. It was Joan's first adult hello of the day.

"Rough day?" asked Margaret.

"Worse than that," replied Joan. "I've been through one of Roscoe's romps—with accompaniment from Armando. They literally destroyed this afternoon. I always believed in inclusion until Roscoe came along. He's a rocket without a guidance system. When he loses it, he's simply uncontrollable. It's been hell! I figured kids

couldn't be that much tougher than some of the adults I worked with. But an angry client is a lot easier than this."

Margaret smiled. "I get at least one child like that every year. Deep down, you love them, but they can drive you nuts. When you get through to them, you feel wonderful. But when you can't, it breaks your heart. In the meantime, you've got to keep ahead of it. If you get behind, you have a year of misery ahead of you."

"Too late. I'm afraid I'm already behind," responded Joan with a dejected look. "What makes it even harder is that Roscoe is a natural leader. When he goes off the deep end, the other lemmings are right behind. And Armando thinks that he's Sancho Panza, following his master to the end."

"I don't know how many times I've seen a pair like that. Experience helps you put things in perspective, but each year brings a new set of Roscoes. Your training never really prepares you for it."

"Well, it helps just knowing I'm not alone," said Joan with a smile. "Everything has been feeling so overwhelming and stressful. I'm beginning to wonder if I'll ever make it through the year."

"The headaches never go away completely. The heartaches don't either. But that's part of what teaching is all about. Good teachers learn to put them in perspective. Just between us chickens, some people never do. They either get out or burn out. You remind me a little bit of me. My first year teaching, I got lucky. An amazing lady came into my life. She knew more about teaching than I ever hope to know. She taught me a lot, and I've learned a few things since. Some of it might even help with Roscoe."

"I can't believe it," sighed Joan. "They say your first year is like being tossed into a swimming pool. You sink or swim on your own. I could sure use some help. Maybe I shouldn't even ask this, but do you also give advice on love lives?"

Joan hesitated until she saw Margaret smile warmly. Then she continued. "I've been going with a guy named Larry ever since I was in college. Things were going fine until I started teaching. He can't seem to understand why I don't have as much time for him anymore. I'm afraid he's about ready to tell me that either Pico goes or he does. How do I convince him that things will get better? Right now, I'm supposed to meet him for dinner in an hour, and I've got a million things left to do."

Margaret laughed gently. "Well, I'm not much of an expert on how to deal with Larry, because I'm still single. But let me meet this Larry sometime. Right now, though, let's talk about Roscoe."

A week later, Joan was out sick for a day. That was bad enough, but there was worse to come. Jaime Rodriguez found her on the way to her classroom the next morning. His news was bad. Roscoe and Armando had been so unruly that the substitute teacher had left muttering that she would never take that class again. Joan could not help feeling miffed by Jaime's suggestion that she attend an in-service seminar on strategies for dealing with exceptional youngsters. Was Rodriguez blaming her? Did he think she had somehow failed? Joan decided it was time to develop her own homegrown strategy.

Following Margaret's advice, Joan began by trying to learn more about Roscoe from someone who knew him well. Joan knew just the person to ask. Heidi Hernandez was one of the brightest and most cooperative students in her class. Heidi was wise beyond her years, though she tended to perform below the incredible potential that Joan saw in her. Heidi often stayed after school to talk to Joan about her own dream of going to college and becoming a teacher—even though no one else in her family had graduated from high school. Joan knew that Heidi and Roscoe lived in the same neighborhood. Equally important, she felt she could trust Heidi.

As class was ending on a sunny Thursday afternoon, Joan struck up a conversation. "You know Roscoe pretty well, don't you, Heidi?" she asked.

"Sure," said Heidi. "He lives right down the street from me. Sometimes we walk to school together. Sometimes, he's real nice. Other times, he's just plain mean."

"Why do you think that is?" asked Joan.

Heidi hesitated for a moment. "This won't get Roscoe in trouble, will it?"

"No, it won't," Joan replied. "I'm Roscoe's teacher as much as I am yours. Maybe you know something that would help me be a better teacher for him."

Heidi screwed up her face and thought for a moment about what Miss Hilliard had said. Then she appeared to relax and started to talk freely. "I think about him a lot, Miss Hilliard. His mom doesn't fix dinner for him the way my mom does. His father gets mad a lot, and he's always yelling. You may not know this, Miss Hilliard, but Roscoe really likes being at school. He thinks you're the best. I think he really wants you to like him, but he doesn't think he's smart enough. When he acts weird in class, at least he knows you'll pay attention to him."

As she thanked Heidi, Joan tried hard not to show the emotion she was feeling. She knew what she wanted to do next. The next day, she worried all day about how her meeting with Roscoe would turn out. As luck would have it, Roscoe was on reasonably good behavior. He seemed surprised when Joan asked him to stay for a while after the final bell had sounded.

"Come on, Miss Hilliard, what'd I do? Armando was causing all the trouble. Make him stay after school."

"You didn't do anything wrong," Joan assured him. "I just want to talk to you."

"About what?" asked Roscoe suspiciously.

"About you," said Joan.

Roscoe reluctantly agreed to stay. At first, he just stared at his feet, shifting his weight from leg to leg, with a sullen scowl on his face. He seemed afraid that Joan wanted to punish him for something. But as Joan began to ask how Roscoe felt about things, he sat down and looked up at her. He seemed to be looking for clues in Joan's expression. Then he started to talk in a low whisper, and Joan was surprised at what came out. He confirmed many of the things that Heidi had said a day earlier. He did not come right out and say it directly, but he hinted that Joan might be one of the reasons that he enjoyed coming to school. "You're pretty nice," he said. "My last teacher sent me to the office all the time. She said I was a pain. You don't do that, even when I'm bad."

"You know, I like you, Roscoe," Joan replied. "You have a lot of spirit. But let me ask you a question. Do you think you're doing as well as you could in school?"

Roscoe blushed and looked down at his scuffed shoes again. "I don't know," he said. "Maybe not."

"Would you like to do better?" asked Joan.

He looked up, shrugged his shoulders, and said timidly, "I don't know if I can."

"I'm sure you can, and you just said so yourself. Maybe we could make a deal. I help you, and you help me. If we work together, you might be surprised at how well you do."

Roscoe smiled for the first time during their conversation. "You think so? O.K., Miss Hilliard, it's a deal." Then his expression changed to a look somewhere between earnest and impish. "But talk to Armando, too. He's always getting me in trouble."

Over the next few weeks, the results were mixed. Roscoe was not always true to his word, but he did try—and he did improve. At

times, it seemed that he simply could not control himself. At other times, Joan could see him doing his best to resist the temptation to do something disruptive. But even when Roscoe was doing his best, Joan realized that he needed more help if he was going to keep his promise for very long. At lunch one afternoon, she told Margaret what had happened with Roscoe over the last few weeks. "It's an improvement, but I still feel I need to do something more."

"Didn't Jaime offer to send you to that conference on classroom management? I went a few years ago. Even for someone who's been teaching a long time, it's pretty useful. It gave me some neat ideas that really help with all students, especially those with special needs. You might get some good ideas on ways to structure your classroom."

Margaret's endorsement convinced Joan to tell Rodriguez that she would take his suggestion to attend the conference. She had anticipated that the biggest hurdle would be persuading Larry that it was worth her being away on a Saturday. She dreaded one more harangue about being married to her work. The fates were kind for once, though—Larry had to be away on business that weekend.

Joan almost flew to school the Monday morning after the conference. The program had been even better than she had expected. She had learned that she was not alone in her struggle to manage students like Roscoe, and she came away with at least a dozen new ideas. She also came away convinced that many of the issues went beyond her classroom and needed changes in schoolwide policies. She was bubbling with enthusiasm when she turned in her expense report to Phyllis Gleason. Phyllis accepted the report with her usual cheerful efficiency but added an unexpected bit of cautionary advice.

"Joan," she said, "you look just as eager as some of the other teachers who've returned from conferences with a bag of new tricks. Just don't be disappointed if everyone isn't as excited about your new ideas as you are."

Carlos Cortez shared none of Phyllis's caution when Joan talked to him later that morning. Joan had expected Carlos to be supportive. She was thrilled that he was as excited about revising Pico's tracking system as she was. In fact, he quickly arranged for an informal afternoon meeting at Andy's Café with several other young teachers. Everyone there agreed that something needed to be done.

"We're labeling too many kids and shunting them off into special classes or classes for slower kids. That just about guarantees that they'll fall farther and farther behind. And it's particularly the

minority kids who get labeled," said Carlos. "The district's new inclusion policy is a step in the right direction. It's way overdue, really. But there's too much foot-dragging."

"What bothers me is that they're trying to be inclusive without giving teachers the support they need," Joan replied. "Here I am in my first year. I've got some very challenging kids, and I really need some help. I've been wondering, 'Why me?' Am I wrong, or do some of the older teachers figure out ways to get those students assigned to someone with less seniority?"

"I've seen the same thing," replied Carlos. "If you believe in inclusion, you wind up with all the students that other teachers don't want. We really need everyone to get behind the policy and make it a schoolwide commitment. Otherwise, we're just creating a new form of tracking."

Everyone at the table agreed with Joan and Carlos. When they left Andy's later, they had all made a commitment to make the district's policy a part of Pico's philosophy and practice. Carlos and Joan went to work with enthusiasm to develop a presentation to Pico's faculty.

Their optimism grew when they talked to the principal. He applauded their initiative and encouraged them to move forward. When they made their presentation to the faculty, they had expected some questions and criticism, but they were stunned by the outpouring of anger and resistance that swept quickly over the meeting.

Phil Leckney led off by questioning whether younger teachers understood what they were getting into. "Look, guys," he said, "I've been to a lot of conferences too. The eggheads in the universities always have some great new idea to save the world, but I've had a lot of years in the trenches. Those professors aren't talking reality. A lot of them have never taught in a public school classroom."

Vivian Chu, always known as a staunch advocate of high academic standards, jumped in to support Leckney. "When we say that all children should learn, we sometimes wind up focusing all our attention on the children who aren't and forget those who are. The district has already cut funds for gifted and talented. Who's standing up for them? We have to provide a challenging education for our brightest kids. If we don't, their parents will pull them out, and we'll lose kids who provide a model for everyone else. Then, there's all those kids in the middle. Sometimes they're the forgotten majority."

Leckney's and Chu's views received immediate support from a number of veteran teachers. Even Margaret Juhl and Jaime

Rodriguez seemed powerless to turn back the tidal wave of staunch resistance. The meeting ended in a stalemate, and a visibly shaken Joan grabbed Margaret on the way out of the room to ask in a trembling whisper if they could talk later. Margaret asked Joan to give her a call in the evening.

On the telephone that night, Joan got right to the point. "Could you believe that today? We're trying to help students who aren't being served. A lot of those teachers are locked in concrete. They put their own convenience ahead of the needs of the kids."

Joan was surprised by Margaret's candid response. "I wish that you had talked to me before the meeting. I could have predicted the response that you'd get."

Joan was as surprised as she was disappointed. "Are you saying we should have just kept quiet? Whose side are you on, anyway?"

"I'm on your side, because I think you're right," said Margaret, "but I understand where the others are coming from. This issue is not just about students. It has a lot to do with the same thing you're concerned about—managing differences. You remember how the battle lines were drawn between you and Roscoe. The standoff began to change when you took time to understand his side of things. You've got a similar situation here. But instead of a difference between two individuals, we now have a potential war between two groups. People are starting to rally the troops to make sure their interests triumph. You have a political problem. You need a political strategy."

"This isn't about politics, it's about students. Why should I need a political strategy?" Joan asked skeptically.

"It may sound cynical, but it's also realistic. We have two groups with different beliefs, and both are struggling for what they think is right. But we'll all lose if the school turns into a battleground."

"So, are we supposed to just back down?" asked Joan with more than a hint of annoyance in her voice.

"One of the things they never teach you in graduate school is how to understand political tugs and pulls. But you must have run into this kind of thing in your old job."

"Sure, but the office politics was one of the reasons I wanted to get out of there and into a classroom. In a brokerage, people are always looking for an edge, always trying to outproduce everyone else. I figured schools would be different."

"Not as different as you thought," Margaret replied. "When I was in my second year of teaching, the teachers' union went out on strike. First time in the history of the district. I went out with

most of the teachers, but some of the veterans reported for work. I couldn't believe the hatred on the picket lines—the yelling and the name-calling. I'll never forget talking to one teacher a couple of days before the strike. She told me that no matter what happened, she was coming to work. She said that the students were more important than a few more dollars in her paycheck. After it was over, a lot of her old friends wouldn't even talk to her—they avoided her in the halls. It took a *long* time for the school to recover. I knew I had to learn more about conflict and why it was so hard for people to deal with."

"So what did you do?" asked Joan with curiosity.

"I asked around, and somebody finally told me about a book that had a couple of chapters on organizational politics. I was skeptical until I read them because I figured, 'Hey, I'm a teacher. This sounds like the stuff principals read when they want to know how to manipulate us.' But I devoured that whole book because suddenly a big lightbulb came on. As teachers, we all work in organizations, and half the time we can't figure out what's going on, because no one ever teaches us anything about how they work. We get a lot of stuff about psychology, teaching methods, curriculum—the stuff that's important in the *classroom.* But they don't teach us about *schools.*"

"But why is that important if what you care about is what you do in the classroom?" asked Joan.

"Two reasons," said Margaret confidently. "The first is that the classroom is sort of a miniature organization in its own right. I was surprised when I started to think about it that way. Some things fell into place that never made sense before, and I started to see a lot of new possibilities for teaching and classroom management. Think about the struggle between you and Roscoe. People had tried plenty of coercion and punishment before, and he just kept getting more resistant. You started to get somewhere when you negotiated with him. The second reason is that how the school and the district work as an organization makes a big difference in your classroom. The debate over the inclusion policy is just one example."

"I'm still not with you," replied Joan with a puzzled look. "What's the connection between organizations and the inclusion policy?"

"Look at it this way. From a political perspective, a school is a collection of coalitions—a bunch of different groups, like teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Each group has its own beliefs, its own values, and its own interests. Every group wants certain things, but there's almost never enough to go around. For instance, a

lot of parents would like the school to revolve around the needs of their own child. As a teacher, you want to do everything you can for their child, but you also have to respond to all the other children in your class."

"But that means parents aren't really a coalition. They're a bunch of individuals," protested Joan.

"Sometimes and sometimes not," said Margaret. "Coalitions come and go, depending on the issue at hand. On some issues, the Pico teaching staff is really united, but right now, the inclusion policy is not one of them. Instead, you've got a couple of coalitions forming within the teaching staff, each based on different beliefs, different backgrounds, and different experiences."

"Maybe, but so far I don't see that you're telling me anything I didn't already know."

If Margaret detected the impatience in Joan's voice, it seemed not to bother her. She continued cheerfully, "O.K., but here's where I think it really starts to get interesting. If you want to understand what's really going on around something like the inclusion debate, you need a political map."

"A political map?"

"You want Pico to make a full commitment to the district's inclusion policy. Some people agree, others don't. To make a map, you start by asking who the key players are: Who are the people who are likely to make a difference in how the issue gets resolved?"

"O.K., there's the teachers. Some are with us, some are against us, and some haven't made up their minds."

"Right, and that last group could turn out to be very important," said Margaret. "Who else?"

"Jaime Rodriguez, and he's with us. We know that Dr. Hofsteder, the superintendent, is on our side. Then there are parents, but a lot of them probably haven't thought very much about the issue. Once they hear about it, they'll probably break into different camps, depending on how they think it affects their own children."

"Now we're making progress," said Margaret. "As you're talking about the players, you're also talking about their interests and what stake they have in the issue. If you go around and talk to a few people and ask some questions, you'll probably have an even better understanding. Then, you're ready to create your map."

"I'm beginning to see the map of the inclusion debate. The good news is we have some powerful allies, like the principal and the

superintendent. But the opposition is pretty strong, too. So, we can probably win, but the war could be pretty gruesome."

"Once you understand that, you can start to think about other options besides armed combat."

"Like what?"

"Negotiation, for one."

Deep down, Joan felt very uncomfortable with all the talk of power and combat. She really wanted to believe that a teacher could remain above the sordid world of politics. Yet Margaret made sense. "I don't know. Negotiation sounds like what you do when you're buying a used car, not when you're trying to help kids."

Later that night, Joan wrestled with Margaret's closing suggestion—befriend your enemies. "You could start by meeting with Phil Leckney," Margaret had suggested. Joan wondered if she and Leckney could even have a civil conversation. Yet Margaret was right. It wouldn't help to tear the school apart. Joan also wondered why Margaret had suggested talking with Phyllis Gleason before the meeting with Phil. But the most persuasive thing that Margaret said was, "If you're going to be consistent with your philosophy for dealing with differences among kids, don't you want to practice what you preach in dealing with your colleagues?"

To Joan's surprise, her meeting with Phyllis was a lot like her earlier meeting with Heidi Hernandez. From Phyllis, Joan learned a lot about Phil Leckney and the other teachers who were on his side. Joan got a clearer sense of how much they could do to block the ideas that were so important to her and her allies. Phyllis also helped Joan get a better understanding of what "the opposition" was really concerned about. For example, Leckney was not so much against the new proposal as he was against anything that would make it difficult to stay on top of an already challenging group of students.

Margaret's offer to facilitate the meeting between Joan and Phil Leckney had turned out to be a good idea. It was clear that Margaret had been in similar situations before. She opened the meeting by focusing on the issue rather than on personalities or the feelings people had about one another. She also set some ground rules for the conversation. Both groups, she said, were committed to a quality education for Pico's students, but they had different views on how to do it. She suggested that they start by having both Joan and Phil each talk about their own views, insisting only that they focus on what they wanted for students, instead of what they didn't like about the other's stance.

As they talked, Joan was surprised to find more areas of agreement than she had expected. As the conversation deepened, Leckney acknowledged some of the challenges that he and others were grappling with. "It's changed an awful lot since I started," said Phil at one point. "When I was young, I felt like I came to teach and the students came to learn. That's not how it is anymore. The neighborhood's more run down. We've got a lot more poverty, a lot more single-parent families, more and more kids who barely speak English. We never used to have to worry about weapons or drugs in the school. Maybe I should have been trained as a social worker or something. It's tough enough managing the students I've got."

As Joan acknowledged her own struggles with classroom management, she and Phil felt a bond for the first time. She learned from Phil that part of the opposition to her proposal came because it seemed to require that every teacher add to their burdens when they were already feeling overwhelmed. Many of the teachers were genuinely doubtful that the new approach would be an improvement. They all remembered other "improvements" that had flopped and made things even worse. They feared, in fact, that the proposal might overwhelm teachers and lead to an overall reduction in the quality of instruction at Pico.

Margaret then raised the possibility of a pilot project as a way to learn more about how the new approaches might work. That would give the teachers who believed in the proposal a chance to experiment with it and let others have a chance to wait to see whether their fears and concerns turned out to be justified.

The meeting ended on a high note. Joan and Phil agreed that they both believed in the importance of student achievement and classroom management. Even though they disagreed on the impact of the district's inclusion policy, Phil agreed to support the idea of the experiment. Joan, Carlos, and a small group that called itself the "True Believers" formed to develop plans for the experiment. On learning of the group's name, some of the veterans playfully chose to label themselves the "Wise People." When one of them teasingly suggested that "True Beginners" would have been a better name for the other group, Carlos retorted immediately, "Does your group spell *wise* w-h-i-t-e?" The zingers hit home, but there was laughter on both sides. Joking and teasing became a playful way to acknowledge the tensions and build linkages between the two different groups.

With enthusiastic backing from Jaime Rodriguez and no serious opposition from their colleagues, the "True Believers" plunged into

the effort with great enthusiasm. Unknown to everyone at the time, the inclusion issue was only the tip of the iceberg in a larger problem of student discipline at Pico. While the pilot project moved ahead, new clouds formed on the horizon.

# *Leadership Lessons*

## Map the Terrain, Hone Your Skills

Educators often view politics with a mixture of distaste and dread. They hope that their school will somehow climb beyond the petty world of conflict and self-interest to the sunlit path of reason and collaboration. Like it or not, though, politics won't go away. The question is not whether schools will have politics but what kind of politics they will have. Those who ignore and avoid politics simply leave the field wide open for the less squeamish. It makes much more sense to understand the political landscape and to develop the skills that enable you to be a productive and effective participant.

Schools are political because of two essential features. The first is they are inevitably coalitions of different individuals and groups with enduring differences in background, beliefs, and agendas. People differ by role (for example, parents, teachers, administrators, students), by discipline or grade level (counselors, special education teachers, resource teachers), by race and ethnicity, by social class, and by ideology (for example, beliefs about how best to teach reading or mathematics). The second essential feature is scarce resources. There is never enough money, time, or human energy to do everything or to give everyone all they want. Choices have to be made. Money spent on athletics can't be used to buy textbooks, and vice versa. Someone has to teach in the grade levels where high-stakes tests are mandated, even if no one really wants to. A principal can't review a budget, calm an angry parent, discipline a wayward student, and lobby the superintendent all at the same time.

The interplay of different interests and scarce resources inevitably leads to conflict between individuals and groups. Sometimes competing differences can be fairly easily resolved through reason and data.

More often, they are rooted in deeply held preferences, values, or beliefs. It's like asking Catholics and Baptists to agree about papal authority: There's little that the two groups have in common. In such cases, power and political sophistication become critical.

In coaching the new professionals, Connors and Juhl posed three central questions:

1. *Who are the key players?* Who are the people, or groups, who care about the issue at hand? Will they care enough to support or oppose you? Who will, or might, make a difference in how things turn out? Whose help is necessary? Whose opposition is too important to ignore?

2. *What is the interest of each of the key players or groups?* That is, what stake does each player have in this issue? What does each player want, and what can you do to help them get at least part of what they care about?

3. *How much power does each player have?* Who is likely to have the greatest influence over how this issue plays out? What are the sources of power for each key player? Who could become a valuable ally if their power was mobilized? Are there any "sleeping dogs" better left undisturbed?

The answers to those questions make it possible to draw a map—a two-dimensional figure in which the vertical axis represents power and the horizontal axis represents position, or interest.

Once you have a map, you're in a position to make much more informed choices about what to do. In developing an approach, you can consider the strategies that are typically employed by effective and constructive politicians:

1. *Clarify your agenda.* You are clear on your agenda when you have both a vision of where you want to go and a strategy for getting there.

2. *Build relationships and alliances.* Work on building relationships with the key players. Spend time with them, and find out how they think, what's important for them, and what they would like from you. The better your relationships, the more likely you are to build support and defuse opposition.

3. *Soothe and learn from the opposition.* Talk to potential opponents. Listen to them, ask questions, and listen some more. Make sure that you understand how they think and what they care about. Acknowledge the importance of their perspectives. Encourage them to engage in a dialogue with the people with whom they disagree.

4. *Deal openly with differences.* It is tempting but dangerous to ignore conflict or to sweep it under the rug in hopes that it will go away. Usually it just festers and gets worse. People need a chance to voice their concerns and to hear other people's as well. Otherwise, differences too easily descend into personal animosity, backstabbing, and street fights.

5. *Negotiate.* When you know what you and other key players want, you're ready to talk about options and possibilities for "win–win" solutions. Optimism and persistence can work wonders when guided by the question, What can we do that works for as many people as possible?

PART III

# *The Human Resource Frame*

## Chapter Six

# *Sagging Morale*

The controversy over the inclusion policy gradually subsided. Life at Pico flowed smoothly over the next few months. Even so, Connors warned Jaime to expect more turbulence. As the holiday break approached, he wondered if she had been too pessimistic. Suddenly, he was blindsided by a new and powerful storm that seemed to come from nowhere. Rodriguez always prided himself on his people skills. He found it hard to believe that teacher morale could drop so precipitously. The signs were unmistakable: teachers coming late to faculty meetings, not showing up for parents' night, or resisting playground and cafeteria duty. Rodriguez was particularly stunned by an anonymous newsletter that viciously attacked him, complete with not-so-subtle ethnic slurs. At the end of January, he knew it was time for another long talk with Brenda Connors. Swallowing his pride at having to admit that he should have paid more heed to her warnings, he called and scheduled a dinner later that week.

He and Brenda met at a popular restaurant not far from Connors's school. Over the appetizer, Rodriguez briefed her on the latest crisis. She did not seem very surprised, but made no mention of her earlier warning. Connors noted that sags in teacher morale following the holidays are not unexpected. But then she asked a more pointed question: "How's *your* morale?"

Rodriguez thought carefully before replying, "Pretty bad. Maybe it's just a slump after the holidays, but that newsletter really got to me. It's hard to believe anyone would do something like that. It had to be someone on the staff. I'd really like to think that my staff members are mature professionals, but referring to me as the 'Tortilla Kid' is a pretty low blow."

"Why might someone do something like that, Jaime?" asked Brenda.

"Racism, what else?"

"I was the first black principal in three different schools, so I know something about racism. Sure, there's racism everywhere. But I've learned that if you stop there, it doesn't help very much. It's a label, not a solution. You have to go deeper to find out what's eating at people. Someone has to be pretty frustrated to go that far. The way I see it, people are a lot like plants. Plants have certain needs, like light, water, nutrition, and warmth. When their needs are met, they grow and develop their potential. If not, they shrivel and get distorted."

"If you're saying a principal has to be a gardener, I agree. That's sort of what I try to do. I spend a lot of my time trying to make sure that my teachers get the things they need," Rodriguez responded.

"How do you do that?"

"One of the most important things I've done is to continue a precedent that Phil Bailey started: I'm out visiting classrooms as often as I can."

"What do you do when you make those visits?"

"I always look for things that can help my teachers do a better job. One thing I learned in school is that my job is to be an instructional leader, not a paper pusher. I always talk with teachers about ways to improve instruction. I want to give them the suggestions and feedback they need to create the kind of school that we all want."

"One way that people are different from plants is that they can often tell you what they need, if you pay attention. Are you sure what you're giving them is what they want from you?"

Jaime realized immediately that he wasn't sure if he knew what they wanted. "I don't know," he answered. "Maybe I need to find out."

"Remember that each individual is unique," Brenda replied. "Some of your teachers may appreciate what you're doing, because they want feedback to help them teach better. But others might be looking for a sign that you care or a pat on the back. They might not welcome what you're offering them. Someone could even be upset enough to write a newsletter in retaliation. They might be trying to get back at you: 'If you make my life miserable, I'll return the favor.'"

"But if someone is that upset, why don't they just tell me? I've said any number of times that I'm always available. I've asked them to come to me first when they're upset about something I've done."

"Having your door open does not always mean having an open door. Someone once told me about what he called the mystery-mastery model. He said that people have a tendency to protect themselves. One way is blame someone else when things go wrong. But they rarely tell the person they're blaming, because that's risky. Maybe it's human nature to protect yourself and other people from the truth sometimes. But I've always liked the adage that if life gives you a lemon, try to make lemonade."

"I've got the lemon. What do I do with it?"

"Maybe you can turn this newsletter into an opportunity. It could be a chance to open up the conversation between you and the teachers. Right now, you're not getting what you need, and some of them aren't either."

"You're probably right, but where do I start?"

"When I've run into this kind of situation, I've had good luck with bringing in a neutral third party to help get the conversation going, but that might not work here."

"Why not?"

"Because of where the school is right now. You're still new, and the faculty is pretty suspicious. They might not trust an outsider, particularly someone you bring in. It might be better if you and your teachers take this on together. You'll need to make sure that the faculty supports and feels involved in the process."

"So how would you begin?"

"Suppose you start by talking to some of the people you trust. Ask them what they think is going on and how it should be approached. When you think about a school as a family, it's important to remember that you don't always have to come up with the solution by yourself. Families often work better when everyone shares the responsibility for solving important problems."

"I know what you're saying is right. That's what I try to do at home. But as a new principal, I feel I have to take charge and show people I'm the leader."

"Jaime, in my first year as a principal, I worried about losing my authority and teachers' respect. So, I tried to prove how strong I was. It backfired. People could tell that I was insecure. I learned from Buzz Sawyer that sometimes the best thing you can do is to let other people know how you're feeling. If your school is a garden, you don't have to be the only gardener. Your needs are as important as anyone else's."

"Maybe I've been trying too hard to be superhuman?"

"Exactly. One other point. Sometimes, people want feedback. Other times, they just want support and love. When your wife asks you how she looks in a new dress, she may not be hoping for a detailed critique. She may just want some reassurance."

The next day, Rodriguez met Margaret Juhl at the mailboxes just as she was leaving school. He asked her if she had a minute and invited her into his office. After asking a few questions about her request for more science supplies, he got to the point. "Margaret, it's no secret that we have some unhappy people here. And you know I'm upset about that newsletter. You've always been honest with me. What do you think is going on?"

"I'm as surprised by that as you are. Things seemed to deteriorate really fast after the holidays. Some of our regular moaners started the ball rolling, but it seems like it became infectious, and now almost everyone is mad about something. The newsletter must be from someone who's pretty mad, but didn't feel they could say it directly. I think it's been building for a while."

"What would you think about setting up some informal meetings with small groups of teachers to try to talk about what's going on?"

"I'm not sure. It's been a long time since we've done anything like that. Some informal meetings might get people talking more openly. But I don't think you should initiate it."

"Who should?"

"It would be a lot better if it came from the faculty," Margaret replied. "Let me see what I can do."

"Thanks, Margaret. Is there anything I can do to help you?"

"If you get invited to a meeting, just show up and stay cool," was Margaret's reply.

Rodriguez was surprised when an invitation came from Phil Leckney. He and Leckney were not close, even though Rodriguez had gone out of his way to help with discipline problems in Leckney's classroom. As Rodriguez arrived at Leckney's home, he was reassured by Leckney's warm greeting and hospitality. He had gone to a lot of trouble to arrange the event. The real surprise for Rodriguez came after dinner. The conversation began awkwardly, as if everyone had something to say but was afraid to say it.

Rodriguez tried to get the ball rolling. By talking about what he was feeling, he hoped to get other people to open up as well. "I really want to thank Phil for setting up this meeting. I think everyone knows I was pretty upset by the newsletter. But I'm not looking for

someone to blame. I'm really hoping that we can talk about what's happening and what we can do about it."

After another brief silence, one of the veteran teachers responded, "You want to know what's wrong? I'll tell you. You've been here six months, and all I've gotten from you are kicks in the butt. It's like you come in every day trying to figure out what I'm doing wrong. Did it ever occur to you that I'd like to hear if I'm doing anything right?"

Rodriguez felt every eye in the room turned to him, waiting for his response. Then it came to him that he felt the same way. "I know just what you mean, because that's how I feel. I can understand how you're looking for a pat on the back, because so am I. You're wondering if I see you doing anything right, and I'm wondering if the faculty thinks I'm doing anything right."

"So we feel you're tearing us down," said Margaret, "and you feel that we're tearing you down. It's like the saying that if you feel like a molehill, you try not to let anyone else be a mountain."

The tension broke, and there was an air of relief, even excitement, as people realized they were all feeling starved for support and encouragement. Several teachers shared their own stories around this theme, and the conversation gradually became more open and animated. Rodriguez was still startled when Leckney suddenly interrupted someone else to blurt out, "I've got something I want to get off my chest. I feel even worse than all these other people. You made me look like a wimp in front of my students. That's why I put out that newsletter."

Rodriguez felt a rush of feelings: a mixture of anger, admiration, sorrow, and even a surprising impulse to protect Leckney. After counting slowly to five in his mind, Rodriguez asked Leckney, "But why a broadside like that?"

"Because that's what you've done to me for the past six months," said Leckney. "You seem to save all the warm fuzzies for your Mexican friends."

Carlos Cortez jumped in. "What warm fuzzies?" he asked. "You're crazy if you think he does special favors for his so-called Mexican friends. He does the same thing to us. I'm still looking for my first compliment from the so-called Tortilla Kid." Even Rodriguez started to laugh at that point, though he was not sure why.

The laughter broke some of the tension, but everyone knew the reference to "Mexican friends" had touched a nerve. Rodriguez chose his words carefully. "Phil, I appreciate your honesty. I didn't

like the newsletter, and I particularly didn't like the part about the 'Tortilla Kid.' Frankly, I thought the whole thing was a cheap shot. But it took guts for you to tell me now that you did it. And I hear what people are saying—I've been making your lives miserable, and you've found ways to return the favor. We've been working on two different wavelengths. You felt that I was trying to catch you doing something wrong. All I was thinking about is 'How can we make this school better?' "

"I care about that, too," replied Leckney. "But constant criticism doesn't help me teach better."

"I know how that feels. I understand that I haven't been telling you about all the good things you're doing. What I'm learning tonight is that we all want a place where we feel accepted and cared for. We have some work to do to create that. Even though some of us are Latino, some are black, and others are Anglo, we're all professionals, and we all have the same job. If we work together, we can do it."

Joan was quiet during much of the meeting. She felt numbed by all the tension. She was relieved, though, to feel a new spirit of cooperation as she left Leckney's home on her way to a nearby coffee shop to meet with Margaret. As she drove to the restaurant, she found herself thinking more about her seesaw relationship with Larry than about the school. Margaret had finally met Larry the week before. He seemed genuinely captivated by her stories about teaching. He even shared his own stories about teachers who had been important to him. Afterwards, he had given Joan the supreme compliment. "Honey, I may be out to make a fortune. But in your new career, you're destined to make a difference."

It felt like a breakthrough at the time, but Larry was soon back to his unsympathetic self. Joan had been stung by his harsh tone a few nights later as they met at the pizza shop. "First of all, you're late. Second, all you want to talk about is what's going on at that freaking school. I'm getting fed up!"

Joan felt embarrassed, guilty, and angry all at once. But she resisted the temptation to strike back. She tried the same advice that had seemed to help with both Roscoe and Phil Leckney. "Do you feel I'm putting the school ahead of you?" she ventured.

"It's pretty obvious, isn't it?"

Joan tried to reassure him, to convince him how important he was to her. He listened and seemed to calm down a bit. For a while,

it appeared as if they were finally making some headway. But then the conversation ran into an invisible roadblock neither knew how to get around. "At least we have an icy truce," Joan thought afterwards. But she doubted that the war was over. Then she pulled into the parking lot of the restaurant and spotted Margaret's car.

As soon as they sat down, Margaret sensed Joan's preoccupation. "What's on your mind?" she asked as casually as she could.

"Larry, more than anything."

"I enjoyed meeting him."

"Oh, he felt the same way. Afterwards, he sounded as if he was really beginning to understand why my work is so important to me," Joan said with a sigh.

"You don't sound that pleased."

"I was, but it didn't last. Now he's back to grumping again."

"What about?"

"I don't have time for him. I can't let go of my work. I'm putting everything else ahead of him." She paused. "Maybe he's right."

"It sounds like you both need things that you're not getting from the other."

"I know that," Joan said with annoyance. "We talked about that. It seemed to help for a while. But I don't think we really resolved anything. It's a little like dealing with Roscoe."

"Teaching and relationships have a lot in common. What's your biggest concern about Larry?"

"That he doesn't understand me. He doesn't listen. He doesn't really care about my needs."

"And how is that different from what concerns him?"

Silence fell over the booth. Joan saw it right away but hated to admit it. She and Larry felt pretty much the same thing about one another.

"Here's what often happens," Margaret continued. "Something goes wrong in a relationship. We get upset, and we start to blame the other person. Then we start trying to fix whatever we think is wrong with them. We pressure them, try to manipulate them, tell them what they're doing wrong."

"That's pretty much what I'm getting from Larry."

"How well is it working?"

"It just makes things worse."

"Could he feel you're doing the same thing to him?"

"Probably," Joan admitted.

"So there you are. We try to get the other person to change. It doesn't work very well, but then we blame the other person for being defensive and not listening."

Joan was squirming. Margaret's words were hitting all too close to home. "So," Joan asked, "what's the alternative?"

"Communication. Listening. Working together. Start with the things you have in common. Such as, you want him to care about you, and he wants you to care about him. If you can say that to each other, then you can start talking about what each of you can do to help the other."

"It seems so obvious," said Joan ruefully. "Instead of being honest about what I want from Larry, I've been criticizing him for not giving it to me. And he's doing the same to me. What's crazy is that we're at war because we both feel the same way."

"It happens all the time," replied Margaret. "It's easy to forget that a relationship is always a two-way street. You need to be open with Larry about what you're feeling, but you also need to make sure you understand where he's coming from. When Larry said he was fed up, you could have told him he wasn't half as fed up as you were. Instead, you asked him if he felt you care more about the school than about him. You had a hunch about what he was feeling, and you checked it out. That's when the conversation shifted, right?"

"Yeah. For a little while, anyway."

"It was a good start," said Margaret. "You have to keep at it. You're not likely to see a miracle cure with Larry, or with Roscoe."

Joan felt herself breathe a sigh of relief. She could feel her shoulders and arms relax. She sipped on hot chocolate and thanked Margaret for listening and caring. Meanwhile, across town, the telephone was ringing in Brenda Connors's home. An exhausted but elated Jaime was on the other end of the line. "Thanks," he said. "You gave me the nudge I needed. I learned how big a gap you can have between what you think you're doing and what your teachers think you're doing."

"I had to learn that the hard way myself," Connors replied. "We all carry around these pictures of ourselves the way we'd like to be. But we don't always live up to our ideas, and a lot of times we don't know when we're not. The people around see what we do, not what we think we're doing. I've had a lot of painful lessons about the gaps between what I'm doing and what I think I'm doing. The only way I've found to get those lessons is to get honest feedback from others."

"That's exactly what happened for me," said Rodriguez. "And you're right about one thing. Feedback can sting."

"Sure. That's why people don't always ask for it. But it's a case of pay now or pay later. Procrastinate, and the price goes up. The truth often hurts in the short run, but it seems to bring dividends over the long haul."

"Well, I've got the pain. I hope I'll see the gain as well."

# *Leadership Lessons*

## Build Relationships and Empower Yourself

Even highly educated professionals bring their needs and their humanity with them when they come to work. They still need to feel safe, to belong, to feel appreciated, and to feel that they make a difference. School administrators sometimes make the mistake of sucking up as much responsibility and power as they can, often with plenty of encouragement from their constituents. Our colleague, Mari Takahashi, compared schools in the United States and in Japan. She found that in the United States, principals tended to feel the weight of just about everything on their shoulders. In Japan, staff and students felt a responsibility to make the principal's job easier. U.S. principals worked much longer days, with much of their time devoted to fighting one fire after another. Japanese principals arrived later and left earlier—they couldn't stay too late in the afternoon, because teachers felt they could only go home after the principal had left.

The following guidelines can help principals and teachers respond to some of the perennial relationship challenges in schools:

*Empower yourself and others.* When leaders try to do everything themselves, they leave everyone else frustrated and disempowered. The school bogs down because nothing gets done unless the boss does it or approves it. Connors encouraged Rodriguez to open up communication and share the responsibility for making the school a better place. Staff began to feel that their needs were finally being recognized, and feelings of ownership started to spread. Likewise, Juhl demonstrated how to combine caring, honesty, and effective listening to build open, collaborative dialogues.

*Open up communications—ask questions and tell the truth.* Spend time with people—particularly with the people who seem to disagree with you. When we're at odds with someone else, we often avoid them and stop listening to them. The problem is that when we shut down, they shut down as well. When conflict arose between Rodriguez and the faculty, Connors encouraged him to get closer rather than to withdraw and to work at understanding the sources of the discontent. Loving your enemies is a remarkably durable and practical maxim. Listen to others. Attend to their feelings, concerns, and aspirations. And tell them the truth. It's familiar advice that almost everyone endorses. But it's easier to practice than preach. The primary barrier is fear. We'd say what we think—if we weren't afraid of the consequences. Much of Margaret Juhl's ability to be helpful to both Jaime Rodriguez and Joan Hilliard came from her willingness to risk telling the truth to her boss as well as to her friends—even when she knew they might not like what she had to say.

*Ask for feedback.* Without feedback, both principals and teachers become blind to how they're seen and out of touch with how well they're doing. But the people around us often withhold their perceptions because they're afraid of how we'll respond. Asking is the easiest way to get honest feedback. This takes persistence and skill in framing the right questions. But keep at it and you'll expand your learning opportunities. If you simply ask a friend or colleague, "What did you think about my lesson/classroom management/speech," the first response you get will often amount to vague reassurance ("Seemed fine to me"). Not much help. Follow up with more specific probes: "What do you think worked best?" "What could I have done to make it better?" "How do you think the students reacted?" Persistence makes your requests clear and credible.

*Take initiative to empower yourself and others.* Much of Margaret's Juhl's leadership at Pico School comes from a combination of her experience and her willingness to take initiative on issues that she could just as easily avoid. She doesn't sit around waiting for someone else to fix problems she sees. She can't jump on every challenge that comes along. As most teachers do, she's got too much to do and too little time to do it. But she doesn't let that become an excuse for inaction. By taking initiative and looking for allies who share her concerns, she helps to make Pico a better school.

As Juhl does, you can help your school by looking for chances to contribute, learn, and have fun. Schools almost always have more things to be done than people to do them. Look for opportunities, and grab the most promising ones.

# PART IV

# *The Structural Frame*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# *Student Discipline*

## Who's Really in Charge?

February was turning into Rodriguez's best month yet. The postholiday morale crisis and the anonymous newsletter led to a series of informal meetings with faculty. The process was challenging but, in the end, exhilarating. Morale was up. So was trust. People were talking to one another. Rodriguez was on a high. Until the bubble burst. This time the hot button was student discipline.

In the old days, Sam Shepherd had been tireless in his efforts to bring offenders to justice. He had been police officer, judge, and jury, all rolled into one. When teachers sent offenders to Shepherd, the outcome was never in doubt. He kept the lid tightly clamped on the pressure cooker while he was there. But after he left, the steam began to overflow. Teachers were complaining about not being backed up. There were more fights on the playground and in the lunchroom. Some parents were getting worried about their children's safety.

Rodriguez knew something had to be done. He also knew he could not do it himself. This seemed to be a perfect opportunity to try out the district's new shared decision-making program. The superintendent, Mildred Hofsteder, was a strong advocate for decentralizing responsibility and involving faculty and parents in decision making. Every school had been asked to establish a faculty-parent council to serve as an advisory body to the principal. Because discipline was an issue of great interest to both parents and faculty, it seemed like an ideal task for the newly formed council to work on.

Meanwhile, Joan Hilliard was pleasantly surprised to learn that, as a first-year teacher, she had been elected as the council's first chairperson. Carlos Cortez had persuaded her to become a candidate, and Joan was delighted when Phil Leckney also rose to support her. When she asked Phil about it later, his explanation was simple. "I supported you for two reasons. The first is that your business experience might be useful. The second is that not too many people wanted the job. I might as well tell you that some people may support you because they think you'll be a pushover. But I know you better than that."

At the first meeting of the council, Jaime Rodriguez charged the group with looking into the worsening discipline problem. He offered them two alternatives as a way to focus their discussion. One was to hire an administrator to replace Sam Shepherd. The other was to develop a new schoolwide approach that would involve everyone—the principal, the faculty, and even parents and students—in implementing a shared discipline code. Joan was happy to have the issue on the agenda, but she wondered why Rodriguez hadn't talked to her before presenting the two options. She worried her position as chairperson would be undermined if other council members felt the principal was actually running the show.

In subsequent meetings, her fears were confirmed. The council represented various segments of the Pico community, including teachers, parents, and students. The group was diverse, particularly in ideas about discipline. Despite Joan's best efforts, the council soon bogged down in conflict and trivia. There were debates between liberals and conservatives, teachers and parents, those who wanted a single, schoolwide discipline philosophy, and others who wanted discretion for individual faculty. Rodriguez attended every meeting and often behaved as if he were chairing the council. Joan learned that some individuals were meeting privately with Rodriguez to lobby his support for their private agenda. Joan sensed that she was rapidly losing her ability to be effective as a chair. The question was, What could she do about it? She once again called on Margaret Juhl.

"It's not just you," Margaret said reassuringly, "the same thing is happening in lots of schools. Everyone's talking about empowering teachers and sharing decision making, but people are also telling principals that they're supposed to be strong instructional leaders. So principals often feel in a bind. They don't want to step on teachers'

toes, but they feel accountable. As teachers, we often fall into the same trap by waiting for the principal to take the lead. That makes it very confusing. You're supposed to be chairing, but the principal is always there. It's like a dance where no one's sure who's leading, who's following, and what rhythm you're supposed to be listening for. Some people are trying to waltz, and others are doing hip-hop. Shared decision making is a good idea, but it's tough to make it work."

"But why is it so hard?"

"It's basically a structural problem. No one's sure who's in charge. Is it you or the principal? People tend to figure that the principal is the real boss in a school, so they look to him for direction and answers. Jaime feels the pressure, and he does what a lot of administrators do: He shoulders the load. No one's at fault, but it won't fix itself. You'll have to do something to clarify the situation."

"Like what?" asked Joan.

"Well, Jaime's learning fast. I think maybe you just need to get his attention."

"How?"

"Send him a brief note telling him you're quitting."

"You're kidding! I want to be chair. I think I have something to contribute."

"I agree, and so does Jaime. He needs you as the chair at least as much as you need to be in the role. Trust me, as soon as he gets that note, he'll see you."

"Then what?" asked Joan.

"Tell it like it is, and don't pull any punches. Just make sure that Jaime understands you're not blaming him, but you don't want to be part of a two-boss system that confuses everyone."

Joan was doubtful that the gambit would work, but she had enough confidence in Margaret's intuition to give it a try. Besides, she said to herself, I don't have a better idea. Her confidence in Margaret was soon reinforced. Within 24 hours of her sending a note to Jaime, he wrote back asking for a meeting as soon as possible. Joan went to Phyllis Gleason to make an appointment.

"Boy, does he want to see you!" said Phyllis with a knowing smile. "You don't need an appointment. Go right in!"

Jaime literally bounced out of his chair as soon as Joan walked in. He offered her the warmest greeting she could remember in a long time. Then he got right to the point. "Joan, I hope you'll reconsider. If you quit now, I think it will set the council back."

Remembering Margaret's advice, Joan knew she didn't want to give in until she was sure Jaime understood the problem. "Well, let me tell you why I resigned. For me, it's been a no-win situation. I've felt responsible for everything because I'm the elected chairperson, but everyone assumed you were really in charge. Every time I tried to do my job, you did something to remind people that you were really running the show."

Joan had feared Jaime would be surprised or even offended at her candor. Instead, he smiled reassuringly. "I think you're right. After I got your note, I talked to a colleague that I trust, Brenda Connors. She told me the same thing. So we agree," Rodriguez replied. "We need to clarify the council's role as well as that of the chairperson. I've got an idea about how we can do it, but I need your help."

"Well, here we go again. You always have the answers. Aren't you interested in my ideas?" asked Joan.

Rodriguez seemed briefly taken aback, but then he smiled again, and openly acknowledged that she had a point. "Look, Joan, I'm new and you're new. We both have a lot to learn. And right now you might not rate me as one of the most promising students you've seen."

It was Joan's turn to smile. "Now we're getting somewhere. But I'm not going to be the chair unless we clear up the confusion about who's running the show."

"Can I offer a suggestion?"

"Sure, if it's really a suggestion and not a command. You have a lot more experience under your belt than I do, and I want to learn from you. But sometimes your suggestions sound more like marching orders."

"Okay, okay, I get the message. You're the captain on this team. You and the council make the decisions. Actually, my suggestion was based on something that Brenda told me about. You decide whether it's a good idea or not. It's a process called CAIRO. It sounds like the capital of Egypt, but it's really a straightforward way of trying to bring structural issues to the surface."

"How does it work?" asked Joan, willing to hear him out.

"Well, CAIRO is an acronym. Each of the letters stands for a different kind of responsibility that someone can have in a decision. For example, someone, or some group, is ultimately responsible for making it. They get the *R* in Cairo, because they're responsible; the monkey is on their back. A *C* goes to anyone who needs to be

consulted. *A* designates someone who has to approve the decision. If someone just has to be informed about the decision, they get an *I*. And they get an *O* if they're out of the decision loop."

"O.K., I know what you're talking about. I ran into something similar in my last job. So, you set up a chart, like a matrix, with the different people along one dimension and the different responsibilities along the other."

"Exactly."

Joan liked the idea, but worried Jaime would try to take too much responsibility for implementing his "suggestion." She stated her concern directly. "If we do it, I need to manage the process."

"That's a deal! Let me know if you want me to help. And tell me the next time you think I'm stepping on your toes."

At the next meeting, Joan led the council through the CAIRO exercise. She explained the CAIRO acronym and distributed a matrix. First, she asked everyone to fill it out individually. Then they shared their individual perceptions. It was an eye-opener for everyone. It turned out that there were at least three different ideas about how the discipline policy was supposed to be developed. Implicitly, Rodriguez believed that it was his decision in the final analysis. Many teachers felt that the responsibility ultimately ought to be theirs, as most of the implementation would fall into their laps. Many parents felt that the council should make the final decision. The group broke into laughter when a parent commented, "This looks a lot like the way my family works."

Afterwards, Hilliard went to Rodriguez and said, "You know, the exercise helped. But I realized something even more basic today. The way the council is set up almost guarantees failure. It's the wrong group to hammer out something as complicated as a new discipline policy. The council is too big, it's too diverse, and it's got too much to do and too little time to do it. The CAIRO exercise showed we have too many people who think they have the *R*. But if you think about it, only some on the council have a big stake in this policy. I think we should make them a group with responsibility for preparing a draft. They could consult with you, with the teachers, with the community, and with students. Then, if I understand how this site-based management is supposed to work, the council should retain final approval rights."

Jaime closed his eyes and clasped his hands to his lips. It was clear that he was thinking hard about what Joan had said. "Maybe

you hit the nail on the head. Maybe I set this up wrong to begin with. I was talking to Brenda Connors about this. She told me that a group needs to be clear about four things: what it's supposed to do, what authority it has, who it's accountable to, and what it's accountable for. You're right—a smaller group with a clearer task has a better shot at coming up with a workable policy. The council already has too much on its plate."

"Exactly. So the council can make its job easier by delegating this task. But they have to give the subgroup a clear charge."

"I agree. Is part of the charge to make sure that the major players all feel that they were heard in the process?"

"Sure," said Hilliard. "Let me develop a plan. I'll check it with you and with some of the council members. If enough people buy in, I'll get someone to bring it to the council."

At the council's next meeting, Hilliard arranged for a parent to propose a new design for dealing with the discipline problem. The parent said at the outset that the proposal had emerged from conversations among a number of people concerned about making the council work better. "The idea that we've come up with," she said, "is to create a task force. Their job is to develop a proposal and bring it back to us. They will consult with the entire school community and develop an approach that's fair, consistent, and workable for faculty, parents, and students. Then they'll come back to us. We can either approve the policy, modify it, or send it back for more work. Once we approve, the policy goes to Mr. Rodriguez, who says he expects to support our decision."

Several council members glanced at Jaime, wondering whether they could believe what they had heard. Jaime acknowledged the glances and said simply, "The only thing I want to add is that I fully support this approach."

A teacher responded immediately, "That just makes so much sense. We've been beating our heads on a wall and getting nowhere. I think it's a great idea." After discussion and some modification of the proposal, the council approved it. A task force of three teachers and two parents went to work with enthusiasm. After holding many meetings with different parts of the school community, they came back to the council two months later with a proposal that soon drew broad support. The council approved the new policy unanimously, and everyone was optimistic that the whole effort was a giant step forward for the school.

The council did not stop there. One parent had commented pointedly, "Before we get too smug, remember that we've been through things like this before with the PTA. We make decisions, but nothing gets done. Someone called it the 'Pico pile,' the scrap heap of policies and programs that get approved but never really happen."

"You're raising a really important issue," Rodriguez commented. Who has the *R* for implementing the new policy? Otherwise, it might fall through the cracks or into my lap."

"That makes sense," said Hilliard. "We need to be clear about that so the new policy doesn't wind up in the Pico pile. Is this something the council should do, or should we ask the discipline task force to work on it?"

Rodriguez smiled to himself as the council decided to work through the implementation issues. He felt that he had helped move the process forward without taking over. He planned to tell Brenda that evening.

The success of the discipline task force had many ripple effects. Later that night, Brenda Connors smiled to herself after another telephone conversation with Rodriguez. "He's learning fast," she thought. "He has terrific people skills, but I knew he needed to get a better handle on structure. I used to have the same problem. I figured if I cared about people, structure wasn't that big a deal. In a way, Jaime is catching on faster than I did." She gave herself a pat on the back for helping to speed up his progress.

During a long lunch break on a Saturday shopping excursion, Joan recounted the details of the discipline policy process to Margaret. Margaret seemed very pleased. "I hope you feel as proud as I do about what you've accomplished. Maybe it's your business experience. Even though you're a rookie teacher, you're becoming a model of what it means to be a teacher leader."

Joan beamed with pleasure. "Well, I really owe it all to you."

"Maybe I helped, but you really owe it to yourself. You brought a lot with you, and you learn fast. I think you're in line for rookie of the year. I just hope our colleagues can learn from your example. We're going to run into other issues just as tough as the discipline policy. If shared leadership is going to work at Pico, more teachers have to believe they can take some initiative."

"One reason for them to do it is that it helps in the classroom as well," replied Joan. "In working out the confusion in the council, I realized that I have similar issues in my classroom."

"Which ones?" asked Margaret.

"Well, I was doing to my class what Jaime was doing to the council—taking on all the responsibility. I was training them to be passive learners, always waiting for my next instructions. I did all the work, and all they had to do was sit and watch. It's not easy, but I'm trying to show them the difference between the *R* and the *C* in CAIRO. I'm trying to structure tasks where I have a *C*—they should consult me for ideas and suggestions—but they have the *R*. They're accountable for the decisions they make."

Margaret thought for a moment, and then said, "Of course. Whether we're talking about empowering teachers or empowering students, the basic issues are the same. I've got an idea! You and I should do a schoolwide in-service on CAIRO and how it relates to relationships between students and teachers. We'll try to get parents involved too. What do you think?"

"I'd love to! I learn so much every time we talk, but we haven't had that many opportunities to work together. The rookie and the veteran—we might make a great team."

"We already make a great team. The rookie is turning into a pro."

Joan savored that comment throughout a quiet evening at her apartment. Larry was on another weekend business trip. Sometimes Joan was almost relieved when Larry was away midweek, since she usually had so much work to do anyway. But a Saturday night alone was a different matter. She wanted to call him, but once again he had neglected to mention where he would be staying. There were too many hotels in Atlanta for her to spend the night trying to track him down. "Oh, well," she thought to herself. "Maybe it's just as well. If I tried to explain why I'm feeling so good about my conversation with Margaret, he might just tune me out anyway."

The ringing of the phone interrupted her reverie. "Sorry I couldn't call earlier, honey," said Larry's familiar voice, "but the meeting ran late. Anyway, I wanted to tell you that I love you. What's happening?"

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# *Standards*

The tension in the faculty lounge could be cut with a knife. The superintendent of schools, Mildred Hofsteder, rarely visited Pico. When she did, there was always trouble, at least in the memories of many teachers. Today she was here to attend the afternoon faculty meeting. There was none of the usual banter as teachers filed in. Dr. Hofsteder stood at the front, flanked by Rodriguez and an older man with gray hair, a gray suit, and a generally gray look.

"Bureaucrat. Probably from the State Department of Education," Phil Leckney whispered to Joan.

"We're really in for it," she replied.

Jaime opened the meeting with brief introductions of the guests before yielding to the superintendent.

Hofsteder wasted no time in getting to the agenda. "As you know, the legislature has passed new state standards for reading and math. Naturally, we will be complying with this new mandate. At the end of each year we will be testing students in grades four through eight to assess our progress. As the law requires, scores will be reported for each school and the school-level results will be available to the public. Dr. Samuels from the Department of Education will brief you on the details."

Samuels droned earnestly into his presentation and soon lost much of his audience.

"What's he saying?" Joan asked Phil.

"Dunno. The guy only speaks bureaucratese."

But Samuels seemed to warm to his subject when he shifted to the topic of accountability, and his next words snapped the audience back to attention.

"The State Department wants to be sure that schools understand the seriousness of our new process for promoting educational excellence. There will be no free rides for underperforming schools, principals, or teachers. All children should be learning. If they're not, then we'll move resources to schools that can provide the educational support the students need."

By the time he finished, Samuels had left most of the teachers feeling indicted and threatened. His request for questions brought only silence. Joan looked over to Margaret Juhl, half expecting her to leap to the school's defense, but even Margaret sat tight-lipped. Jaime looked almost ill. He squirmed but finally regained his composure and thanked the guests for coming to Pico. Hofsteder and Samuels exited, leaving a very quiet room behind them. Only when they were out of earshot did the real meeting began.

"Good God!" Leckney gasped. "They want us to create school councils. They've put in tougher evaluations for teachers. They instituted a new drug program. We're supposed to be working more closely with business. Now they're going reduce our teaching to a bunch of items on a multiple-choice test. Maybe I'm getting too old for this sort of thing, but come on! I'm a professional. Treat me like one!"

Rodriguez was surprised at the intensity of his reaction. "That's pretty strong even for you, Phil. What bothers you so much?"

"When you've been teaching as long as I have, you see a lot of things come and go—alternative this, new that, authentic something else. We get fads from the business world. Glorious ideas from the universities. Pet projects from politicians. How do you ever build anything if you keep throwing out what you did last year? How is one more fad going to help?"

"I know that the fad of the year is a big problem in education. You all keep reminding me that we have a Pico pile filled with new programs that fell by the wayside. I know it won't solve all our problems," Jaime responded. "But I think you all know the reality. We have a mandate from the state and the district that we can't just ignore."

"But that doesn't mean we have to like it," Phil responded, to nods of assent from many of his colleagues.

"No, but we're going to be better off if we can figure out the most productive way to deal with it. How about if we kick this one around a little before we just dismiss it as worthless."

"Okay," Phil responded in a more modulated voice. "But you're going to have to do a lot more to convince me that this isn't one more flash in the pan they are trying to stuff down our throats."

Jaime was feeling the heat. He knew Samuels's presentation had been a disaster, leaving most of the faculty feeling angry and insulted. But Samuels had gone, and the new state requirements were still in place, backed by a formidable coalition of the governor, the state legislature, and the school board.

"You're right," he said, "we're all dealing with layers of history. We have a trash heap full of all the stuff that comes in and gets tossed out, but hangs around anyway. When I started here, I thought I had answers to the school's problems. All I did was convince most of you that I was the problem. We're all tired of these solutions that are mandated from above. But we can't just give up."

Vivian Chu jumped in with support. "Jaime's right. We all know that some of our kids are falling through the cracks. And we don't have very good ways of identifying those who do. We also know that behind our classroom doors we do pretty much what we want. Remember what's his name? The one who used to teach in Joan's room? His classroom was like a movie theater. All he did was run the projector and keep the kids entertained. I don't know why he didn't sell popcorn. Maybe we do need a little more accountability."

"It's not a matter of being more accountable or giving up. It's what we have to give up in order to be more accountable." Margaret Juhl rose to her feet and spoke with unusual fervor. "We all know what's at the heart of teaching, and that's never going to be measured on a multiple-choice test. Most of you are like me. You became teachers because you wanted to make a difference. And I believe that I do. You can't always measure it with test scores, but over the years I have gathered a lot of testimony from students and parents. If we move on this standards and testing thing, we need to make sure that we don't gut the soul of what we do. We're not here just to dispense information. We're here to shape young lives. Who we are is as important as what we teach."

Nodding heads and affirmative responses showed that, once more, Margaret had hit the nail on the head.

Jaime responded, "I agree, but we're still going to be held accountable for short-term results. It's not just my butt on the line. Pico's reputation is also at stake. However those test scores come

out, they'll be in the newspapers. Right or wrong, a lot of people will be judging us on those numbers. Let me propose that we do two things. Get one group working on the latest research on teaching for results. Vivian, would you be willing to chair that one?"

Vivian nodded assent.

"Margaret," said Jaime, "how about if you chair another effort to work on building evidence around the important intangibles we all value. Joan can bring this matter to the parent council to get their support. What do you think?"

Nodding heads told the story. Even Phil Leckney seemed to be willing to go along. But the banter at the bar later that night painted a less optimistic picture. It wasn't going to be that easy.

As usual, Phil led the initial charge. "Jaime's caught in the middle. He's trying to save his butt by foisting all this off on us. I wish we had a stronger leader, someone who would go to bat for us."

Joan jumped in. "Wait a minute, Phil. You're right, Jaime's getting squeezed like an orange. But we're in the same vise. And speaking of leadership, where were you, Margaret? We all expected you to take the bureaucrat on. Why didn't you speak up while he and the superintendent were here?"

"Over the years, I've learned not to attack when there's nothing to be won. Taking on Samuels might have made us all feel good, but what good would it have done?"

"Shouldn't the bureaucrats hear how teachers really feel?" asked Leckney.

"That wasn't his mission. He was a messenger, sent to read us the riot act. He did his job. If we took him on, we'd get him annoyed, embarrass the superintendent, and make Jaime squirm harder than he already was."

"So now what do we do?" asked Joan.

"Face reality. Pressures for standards and accountability aren't going away anytime soon. So we're in a dilemma. We have to work with the prevailing policies, but we also have to do what's right for our kids. It's a dance. Good teachers have done it for years. They'll still be doing it long after I'm retired."

"Retirement is sounding pretty good to me," Phil volunteered.

"Phil," said Margaret soothingly, "you know your wife says that the day you retire, she's moving out."

"You've got a point, but why should I stay if I'm going to be spending most of my time teaching to the test?"

"Phil, I wouldn't stay either if that were the price," said Margaret. "The tests are one way to keep score. Not the only way. To my mind, not the most important way. I want my kids to learn what they need to learn. If they do, they'll probably do all right on the tests. But the test that matters is whether I help them have productive and happy lives. If they do better on that one than on a bunch of multiple-choice items, I figure I've been a success."

"Dangerous thinking, Margaret," Phil responded.

Margaret smiled. "Old-timers like you and me are dangerous. We're the kamikazes who can keep the pot stirred and help strike a balance between testing and caring. There are a lot of people in this community who've been touched by what we do. If we play this right, we'll get a lot of support from them and from our kids and parents. That's why Jaime's committees make good sense. It lets us buy some time and get our ducks lined up."

"I hope they're not sitting ducks," Phil sighed.

Everyone laughed. And then Joan pitched in, "Only time will tell."

# *Leadership Lessons*

## Align the Structure With the Work

In a classroom, a school, or any other group, people like to know where they're headed, who's in charge, what they're supposed to do, and how their efforts relate to others'. Putting eager students or talented teachers into a confusing system wastes their energy and undermines their effectiveness. Structural arrangements demand continual attention just as human needs do. Teachers sometimes figure that the job of social architect is reserved for administrators. Bosses are supposed to develop policies, provide direction, and make sure everyone's on the same page. Sometimes administrators live up to expectations. Often, they don't. If administrators aren't picking up the ball, someone had better, or there will be frustration all around.

*Clarify roles.* On any team, people need to know how their work relates to others'. Without coordination and teamwork, the best individual efforts produce a poor outcome. Maybe you remember a time you made an inspired effort that flopped because someone got in your way or didn't come through. It's frustrating for everyone. If you're in a situation where people are constantly stepping on others' toes or pointing fingers of blame, try an experiment. Choose an issue or task where there is continual confusion or conflict. Apply the CAIRO concepts. Create a matrix listing responsibilities in the far-left column. In the remaining columns, place individual roles across the top. Now have everyone individually assign a letter to each person for every responsibility. Give *R* to the person who's responsible—the one with the monkey on his or her back. Now assign letters specifying that person's (or group's) relationships to others. Give an *I* to anyone to be kept informed, a *C* to anyone who

needs to be consulted, an *A* to anyone who has approval rights, and an *O* to anyone essentially "out of the loop." CAIRO goes beyond an organization chart to pinpoint exactly what people are expected to do and how they relate to others. Any employee can initiate the activity. Administrative blessing isn't essential, though it certainly helps.

The CAIRO exercise done collectively usually produces several important discoveries. It shows that people often have very different views of how things are supposed to work. It reveals who's overloaded or underused, how many levels of approval someone needs before taking action, and who appears to need to be in control. The exercise often clarifies why people are always at each other's throats and why important things rarely get done.

*Design groups for success rather than failure.* Groups are a basic feature of schools. Every classroom is a group, and teachers often group students for instructional purposes. Teachers and administrators participate in a variety of teams and groups, both large and small. Whether you're the leader or a member, you won't have a very good experience in a group that doesn't know where it's going or what it's supposed to do. Make sure the group is clear about Brenda Connors's four keys to success:

1. What are we supposed to do? (What's our goal? What's the task we're charged to do?)
2. What authority and resources do we have?
3. To whom are we accountable?
4. What are we accountable for? (What are we supposed to produce? A policy? An implementation plan? A written report? An oral presentation?)

Groups need to know what they are supposed to do, how their success will be judged, and who will do the judging. Student groups need to know if they're accountable simply to each other, or to the teacher. When principals appoint a faculty committee or task force, they need to be clear what it's supposed to do and what authority it has. Is it supposed to make a decision, or simply make recommendations? What authority and resources does the group have? Groups with manageable tasks, sufficient authority, and clear accountability have a higher probability of success.

*Set or clarify goals.* Deep down, we're all goal directed. Teachers or students rally to a cause they know about and care about. No one gets energized by goals they don't know, can't understand, or don't believe in. The trick is to set specific, measurable goals that set up a clear, challenging, reachable target.

*Shape a structure that fits.* In schools and classrooms, a lot of structure is already in place—curricula, assessment procedures, legal mandates, and much more. Some is helpful. Some gets in the way. How do we decide what arrangement of roles and relationships we need? A workable structure has to fit the task and the people who will do it. Structure is definitely not a matter of one-size-fits-all. A top-down structure with clear rules and specific procedures works for routine, repetitive tasks like ordering supplies, issuing paychecks, and scheduling classes. But the same system breaks down in handling more complex and open-ended tasks, particularly ones that require skill and discretion. There can be value in standardized curricula and proven teaching techniques if they are offered as tools that teachers can adapt to their specific circumstances. But efforts to improve schools by imposing "teacher-proof" methods have continually run aground in the face of the unpredictable and unique features of individual teachers, students, and classrooms.

Structure can work for or against us, though we're much more likely to notice when it misfires or gets in our way. There are good rules—and bad ones. Brilliant meetings and disasters. Sometimes people in authority know what they are doing; others haven't a clue. More discretion sometimes pays off big. Other times, it produces mammoth screwups. Schools have good and bad goals. The good ones are displayed as virtues. Shadier ambitions are hidden. A workable balance between public virtues and the "real objectives" provides a reasonable focus that people can honor and accept. Finding the right balance is an ongoing challenge. It doesn't do any good to label all structure as bureaucracy and red tape. We need to make the formal system work for us. That's not the sole province of anyone. It's an ongoing dance. When the dance goes well, it shapes arrangements that generally work. Not all the time, or for everyone. But for most people most of the time. It only happens when teachers and administrators stop blaming and learn to dance the same steps.

# PART V

# *The Symbolic Frame*

## CHAPTER NINE

# *The End of the Year*

### Symbols and Culture in Schools

Jaime Rodriguez and Brenda Connors met for dinner at a sidewalk café on a beautiful evening in May. For Jaime, it was a chance to thank Brenda for all her help. For her, it was a chance to congratulate a star pupil on a very successful first year. That done, Rodriguez turned to a lingering issue—the ghost of Phil Bailey. "You know, even though I feel good about what we've been able to do this year, I don't understand why there's still so much talk about Phil. It's like his ghost runs the school. One thing I'd like to do before the end of the year is exorcize his haunting presence."

"Maybe an exorcism might work," said Brenda, "but there's another way to think about it. It's human nature to form attachments. We get attached to things and people that are important to us. We even bond to things we don't like—like devils or scapegoats. We blame them for problems we don't understand. When an attachment is broken—if you lose a job, get divorced, or move to a new city—you feel the loss. Think about your own experience. How do you feel when you lose something you care about?"

"A lot of things," replied Rodriguez. "I feel sad, angry, confused, depressed, ambivalent, you name it. I see it in people around me. I remember what my mother went through after my father's death. It was real tough."

"Sure. A death in the family might be the biggest loss of all. But you can feel loss even with something that doesn't seem important. Remember the caboose at the end of the train? It isn't there anymore.

A little electronic box does the job today more efficiently than the old caboose and its crew," Connors pointed out.

"But," Jaime objected, "I used to love waving at the caboose when I was kid."

"That was a long time ago, but you still miss the caboose. Phil Bailey is Pico's caboose, and you're the electronic box. Most cultures have figured out that ceremonies help people deal with loss. When people die, we have wakes, flowers, funerals, and mourning periods. When people get married, we have an elaborate ceremony and a big party."

"Marriage is a loss?" asked Rodriguez.

"There's something lost and something gained in any major change. People get married for love and companionship, the desire to have children, and lots of other positive things. But marriages get into trouble because people have trouble letting go of old identities and old relationships. That's why there are so many jokes about in-laws. It can take years to make transitions. Phil Bailey was at Pico a long time. It's not surprising that people still miss him. Change is a little like what happens when a trapeze artist has to let go of one bar before grabbing the next. It's scary to let go, but there's more danger in hanging on too long."

"Does that mean we need a funeral for Bailey?"

"Something like that," Brenda replied thoughtfully. "Even though people know you're the principal, it's harder for them to accept it until the torch has been symbolically passed. What did they do to mark Phil's retirement?"

"Nothing, actually. They wanted to hold a retirement dinner, but Phil said he wouldn't come."

"That's too bad. People need a chance to celebrate both his accomplishments and his screwups, to savor the memories, and to tell stories. They need to say 'Thank you,' 'We care about you,' and 'We wish you well.'"

"But Bailey didn't die," said Rodriguez. "He retired. He doesn't need a casket. He's having too much fun on the golf course."

"But, for many people, his retirement still feels like a death in the family. To them, he's gone. They've never had a chance to mourn his loss or celebrate his life at the school, so it's harder for them to let go. If people haven't let go of Phil, it's hard for them to form attachments with you."

"So maybe I need to plan a funeral and see if we can get rid of the ghost for good."

"Remember, you're still a newcomer to the school's culture. You haven't paid your dues yet. You need to check in with the key people in Pico's cultural network. They need to plan and bless something this important."

"Who do you have in mind?"

"Didn't you say that Bill Hill is the eyes and ears of Pico?"

"Yes. He's the unofficial message center. I get the point. I need to talk to him. I also need to talk to Phyllis, because she's the school historian."

"She may be even more than that. She might be the unofficial priestess."

Rodriguez looked surprised.

"From what I've heard," Brenda explained, "Phyllis takes confessions and gives blessings. She keeps confidences. But she weaves what she hears into her portrait of the school. She celebrates things that succeed. She gives comfort when things go wrong. She's like the priests and priestesses in traditional cultures. They were storytellers, and they presided over rites and ceremonies. She may be a key custodian of Pico's culture."

"You make it sound like I'm more like a tribal chief than a school principal," protested Rodriguez.

"You've got it, and a good chief, particularly a new one, knows the tribe's spiritual leaders have to be in charge of important ceremonies. Talk to Phyllis. Ask her who should preside over your end-of-the-year ceremony. She'll know. Otherwise, you might shoot yourself in the foot."

The next morning, as Rodriguez lingered over his second cup of coffee, he felt apprehensive and even a little foolish about his meeting with Phyllis. The more he thought about it, the more he worried that Brenda might be leading him into a morass. If she had not been right so many times in the past, he might have ignored her advice.

When he and Phyllis Gleason met, he opened by saying that he needed her help again. Then he asked, "Is Phil Bailey still the presiding principal?"

"Mr. Rodriguez, I wondered when you'd ask me that. Mr. Bailey was around for a long time. He wasn't perfect, and he had his quirks, but people were used to him. He was like an old T-shirt. It's

comfortable and familiar. It reminds you of memories that get better and better as time passes."

"Is it true that he said no to the idea of a retirement party?"

"Absolutely. Mr. Bailey was not the kind of person who stood on ceremony. He literally walked out on the last day, gave me the keys, and told me to send the stuff in his office to his home. He didn't even show up for our end-of-the-year party. I think that hurt a lot of people. People have leftover feelings, including Mr. Bailey. I've talked to his wife a few times. Retirement is tougher than he expected. He sometimes calls friends on the faculty to ask how things are going. They're not sure what to say. It's really past time for Mr. Bailey's official retirement party."

"Maybe for both him and me. I feel I've been in his shadow all year long."

"Do you want me to be frank, Mr. Rodriguez?"

"Of course."

"Well, you've done some things to make it worse."

"Like what?"

"Like the time you came in during Christmas vacation, cleaned out the old storeroom, and redecorated it as a faculty lounge," said Gleason.

"But teachers told me how happy they were to have the lounge," said Rodriguez.

"People don't always tell you everything. A lot of people liked the idea of the lounge. You did a nice job of decorating it. But in creating it, you threw out some things that people really cared about."

"You're telling me people thought that junk was important?"

"How would you feel if someone went up to your grandmother's attic and tossed everything out?"

"I think I'm starting to get it. It just never occurred to me that anyone would miss any of that stuff. I meant it as a gesture of how much I support the teachers," said Rodriguez.

"I wish you had asked me before cleaning out the storeroom," said Gleason. "I could have told you what might happen. It wasn't the stuff itself that was important, it was what it represented. You tossed out memories. The act itself was not so important as what it meant."

"I've learned a lot this year, Phyllis. But I know I still have a lot more to learn. I hope you'll keep on giving me a hand."

"Since you're asking, let me mention one other thing," said Gleason. "Remember parents' night, when you sent the teachers a

memo telling them that everyone would be in the gym, instead of meeting parents in the classrooms?"

"Sure. The idea actually came from a couple of parents. They thought it would be a lot more convenient that way. Otherwise, they have to wander all over the school, particularly if they have more than one child at Pico."

"Maybe, but it's always been a tradition here for teachers to meet parents in their classrooms. That way, parents can see the children's work displayed, and the teachers can show off their domain. A lot of them work very hard on their classrooms, and they're proud of them. At Pico's open house, maybe convenience is not the most important thing for parents or teachers. Maybe they're more concerned about getting a sense of what it's really like in their child's classroom."

"Phyllis, have you ever seen *M*A*S*H*?"

"Sure, why?"

"Our relationship is a lot like the one between Colonel Potter and Radar. You're always way ahead of me," said Rodriguez ruefully.

"I just try to do my job. But you can't learn the ropes alone. Don't worry about Mr. Bailey. I'll take care of it, and I'll let you know what you need to do."

Rodriguez felt a twinge of annoyance at the idea of taking orders from his secretary. Remembering Connors's counsel, he resisted the urge to remind Gleason who was in charge. Instead, he simply said, "Thanks, Phyllis. Let me know what I should do."

Three weeks later, Jaime arrived at his office to find a flyer on his desk announcing the "Fiesta de Pico," to be held on a Friday evening near the end of the school year. The program highlights were to include "Give My Regards to Bailey," "The New Principal's Report Card," and "What a Guy!" Rodriguez felt his stomach tighten, particularly when he thought about getting a performance evaluation in public. Would this be a celebration or a lynching? Was the priestess going to preside over a human sacrifice? He hoped that Brenda Connors knew what she was talking about and that Phyllis Gleason would come through.

On a warm and beautiful evening in June, Rodriguez walked into the school's multipurpose room. He was bowled over. He had never seen the room look so festive. He tried to guess where all the flowers, balloons, and streamers had come from, particularly because he

hadn't signed any budget requests. His attention was drawn to the large banner hanging from the wall that read simply, "Fiesta de Pico: The Beat Goes On!" He noted with relief that the room looked too festive for a lynching. But he was still nervous, because Gleason had not yet told him what he was supposed to do.

Just then, a familiar voice said, "Mr. Rodriguez, glad you came early. How do you like the decorations?" Gleason took Rodriguez aside and briefed him on his role in the event. "When Mr. Bailey arrives, shake his hand, smile, and then go find a seat in the back row. The first part of the party is for him. Whatever happens next, keep smiling, and act as if you're having a good time."

Rodriguez did not feel very reassured, but he had little time to regroup. A large crowd was pouring into the room: teachers, staff, parents on the school council, even the superintendent and all the members of the school board. Just then, he was chagrined to see Sam Shepherd and his wife walk into the room. In his ear, he heard Phyllis whisper, "Go welcome Mr. Shepherd and ask him about the hunting lodge. He's not doing so well financially. Maybe you could schedule a faculty retreat up there to give him a boost." He gritted his teeth and tried to follow Gleason's instructions. He was more than pleased at Sam Shepherd's warm response and stunned when Mrs. Shepherd took him aside and said, "I can't thank you enough for all you did for Sam and our family."

Before he could regain his emotional equilibrium, Rodriguez saw Phil Bailey and his wife walk in to enthusiastic greetings from everyone. It was the kind of entrance that movie stars make at the Academy Awards ceremony. Remembering Gleason's advice, Rodriguez went over to welcome Phil Bailey as warmly as possible before taking his seat in the back row.

What followed caught him off guard. The superintendent, Mildred Hofsteder, walked to the podium. She asked Phil Bailey to come forward. She briefly recounted Bailey's years at Pico and then asked the board chairman to unveil the draped object at the back of the room: a large oil portrait of Bailey. The room erupted in a standing ovation, and Jaime watched as tears streaked down Phil Bailey's cheeks. Though he felt jealous, he kept smiling and joined the crowd in the applause.

Bailey's speech was brief and emotional. It felt a little too emotional to Rodriguez, but he could see that many in the audience were deeply moved. He felt an unexpected sense of relief. He began to ask

himself what it would take to push a raise for Phyllis through the district office.

Next at the rostrum was Margaret Juhl. Her job, she announced, was to give the new principal his first annual report card. "Heaven help me!" thought Jaime, though he forced himself to keep smiling. What followed was a delightfully humorous roast. Rodriguez received an E for effort and an N (Needs to Improve) for citizenship. He tried not to wince at his grade of Needs to Improve for "Opening Sermons to the Faculty," or his citation for "Excessive Zeal in Cleaning Out Old Storerooms." His C (average) for the discipline policy felt low to him. But all that passed when he heard the summary recommendation: "Deserves Promotion to Second-Year Principal."

Juhl then called Jaime forward. Four people shook his hand: Margaret Juhl, Phil Bailey, the superintendent, and the board chairperson. Rodriguez felt a warm flush of joy, but what followed touched him deeply. The entire faculty came to the front of the room. Some of them were off beat and off tune, but their song said it all: "If you knew Jaime, like we know Jaime, oh, oh, what a guy!"

The "fiesta" was not quite over. Joan Hilliard came to the podium to announce that the Pico School Faculty–Parent Council had a certificate to award its principal, Jaime Rodriguez. She read it: "To Jaime Rodriguez, Our Principal. In his leadership of Pico School, may he ever be right. But, right or wrong, our principal!"

After the certificate, the hug from Phyllis gave Jaime the feeling that he was finally the principal of Pico.

A few days after Fiesta de Pico, an exuberant Rodriguez was having lunch with Connors. He had taken special care to let her know that this one was his treat. Connors could sense the excitement and pride as Jaime reviewed the fiesta in loving detail. She congratulated him on his success, and he tried to express how much he appreciated her help. "It's getting late, and I have another meeting," said Brenda, "but I really want you to know how much I've valued our talks over this year. And I have a little something for you."

As Connors reached down to pick up the shopping bag she had brought with her, Jaime pulled out a gift-wrapped package from his briefcase. He placed it on the table in front of her as she brought out her own gift. "Jaime," she asked with a smile, "What's that?"

"Sort of like an apple for the teacher. Open it."

Connors unwrapped the package to find a book by Richard Rodriguez, titled *Hunger of Memory*.

"It's a very important book for me," said Jaime. "The author and I are both named Rodriguez, though we're not related. We're both Mexican Americans. He tells the story of what he went through in learning to live in this culture. He helped me find my own story. You've helped me take that story farther." On the inside cover, the inscription read, "To Brenda, an extraordinary mentor, with thanks and love, Jaime."

Brenda beamed and wiped away a tear. "You shouldn't have, but thanks. You don't know how much this means to me. Well, don't just sit there, open yours."

Jaime admired the package, then opened it slowly. His face broke into a broad smile, even as his eyes welled with tears. There were two items in the package. One was a copy of John Dewey's *Education and Experience*. The inscription read, "To Jaime: You have learned so much this year! I'm proud of you." The second was a small statue of Pico's mascot, the mountain lion, with a plaque that read, "To Jaime Rodriguez, a great friend and a great school leader, from Brenda Connors."

"You could call it recognition for the rookie," said Brenda, "but it's a lot more than that. It's a symbol of what you mean to me and what I know you'll become."

## CHAPTER TEN

# *"I'm Just a Great Teacher!"*

When they hung that portrait of Phil Bailey on the wall, I was almost in tears. That may have been the single best event in all my years at Pico," said Phil Leckney. There were nods around the table at Andy's among a group of teachers who had gathered for refreshments and conversation after Fiesta de Pico.

"It was fantastic!" Joan Hilliard agreed. "Before tonight, I'd never even seen Mr. Bailey, but I'd heard so many stories about him. It was almost like he was a ghost roaming the halls."

"He was," replied Margaret emphatically. "That's why we needed the fiesta."

"Was this your idea, Margaret?" asked Carlos Cortez.

"No, I wish it had been. I'm not sure who thought it up, but I know Phyllis Gleason masterminded a lot of it, with a good bit of help from Bill Hill."

"When the secretary and custodian put together the best party in years," replied Carlos, "it almost puts us professionals to shame."

"Maybe," said Margaret, "but the principal also helped in his own way. He gave it his blessing and stayed out of the way. That was pretty daring for a rookie."

"Aren't you being modest, Margaret?" Joan chimed in. "You had a big role, too. I couldn't believe how funny you were in delivering the new principal's report card to Jaime. I can't remember when I laughed so much. Even Jaime seemed to think it was funny."

For nearly an hour, people shared their favorite stories about the evening. The mood swung fluidly from laughter to tears and back to laughter again. It was Carlos Cortez who broke the magic spell with

a more serious observation. "You know, this is the first time we've all had this much fun together in a very long time. We don't do this often enough."

"Yeah," added Phil Leckney. "And the sad part is that the celebration was for Bailey and Rodriguez, not for us. Why should administrators get all the glory?"

His question struck a nerve, and a long silence spread over the group. Margaret Juhl, looking even more serious than usual, finally said in a very serious voice, "Phil, you just asked the right question. Maybe something's happened to all of us. Teaching used to be magic. It still is, sometimes, but it doesn't always feel that way. Every one of us has probably been at a party and met someone who asks us what we do. We get a little embarrassed and say, 'I'm just a teacher.' That's absurd! We ought to be the proudest people on earth. Yet we're taken for granted."

"Just look what you read in the papers. Schools are failing. Teachers can't teach," Leckney chimed in. There was bitterness in his voice.

"Maybe it's partly our fault," replied Margaret thoughtfully. "We ought to see teaching as a sacred profession. *We* don't take enough time to recognize what makes our job so special."

Joan agreed. "Margaret's absolutely right! This is my first year, and I've already lost some of the spirit I had in September. I love my students. I feel good about how my class went, despite some rough spots. It's just that we don't take time as a group to laugh, share our stories, and have fun together. We did that in my last job. I kind of miss it. If something's missing for *me*, how does it feel after you've been teaching 20 years?"

The emotion in Phil Leckney's voice surprised everyone at the table. "You really want to know? You get more burned out every year. A lot of times you struggle just to get up in the morning and make it through the day. You all know I wasn't crazy about our new principal or about some of the ideas he was pushing. I'm not a fossil. I don't resent new blood. God knows, I need a transfusion once in a while. But I need something so that I don't just coast my way to retirement."

"How about you, Margaret?" asked Joan.

"Maybe I pretend a lot," said Margaret. "My union responsibilities keep me busy, and I'm pretty good at mediating battles among different factions in the faculty. But when I close the classroom door,

I sometimes wonder if I'm really making a difference. I used to be absolutely sure of that, deep down in my heart. Now, I sometimes wonder. Come to think about it, I could use a lift myself."

"Well," said Joan, "if we can have a huge celebration for our principals, why can't we have something like that for teachers? Are principals more important than we are?"

"Of course not!" Carlos responded forcefully. "What matters most at Pico is what happens in the classroom between us and our students. Joan, you've got a great idea! I love Jaime, and tonight's fiesta was wonderful. But we should do something for ourselves as well."

Then, to everyone's delight, Phil Leckney ordered a bottle of imported champagne. "In the Navy," he said, "there was always champagne whenever we launched a new ship. We're launching something just as important. It deserves a toast!"

Throughout the summer, the group continued to meet, gradually transforming themselves into an informal planning team. Initially, they had wondered how Jaime Rodriguez would respond to their plans, but the strength of his enthusiasm made him one of their strongest backers. His only suggestion was that they add Phyllis Gleason to the group. "Phyllis knows how to do celebrations," he said confidently.

It was Phyllis who was the first to suggest that some students from Pico's past be included in the ceremony that the group was planning for opening day in the fall. "You know," she said, "we've had so many students that we might have written off who have gone on to do fabulous things. Take Carla Correa, for example. She's the anchorwoman on Channel 5. Or, how about Benny Bernstein? Who'd have thought he'd become a successful neurosurgeon?"

"You must be putting us on," said Phil Leckney. "Not Benny! Anyone but Benny! He was the shyest, most off-the-wall nerd who ever graced Pico's hallways. We all thought he'd end up part of life's invisible woodwork. Benny does brain surgery?"

"Yes, Benny does—and very well," responded Phyllis. "Try another one. I'll bet none of you know which graduate of Pico is now teaching at Harvard University."

Several tried to guess, but no one hit the mark. "Charley Packer," said Phyllis finally.

That seemed even harder to believe than the idea of Benny Bernstein doing brain surgery. Everyone seemed so stunned that they

could only roll their eyes in disbelief. Phil's almost inaudible whisper broke the silence. "Well, I'll be. I thought he'd be in the state pen, and instead he cracked the Ivy League. But suppose," he continued in a stronger voice, "those folks don't want to come back to Pico?"

"Nonsense," said Phyllis. "You'd be surprised!"

When September rolled around, the planning group was feeling nervous. They had invested an entire summer designing an opening day unlike anything in recent memory. Would it work? Would it flop? Would their colleagues think that they were crazy? Only Phyllis never seemed to lose her serene confidence.

Joan Hilliard heard some of the usual cynical murmurs as Pico's teachers assembled in the front corridor waiting for the opening day's activities to begin. What she overheard was not comforting. Few teachers sounded excited to be back, nor excited about what lay ahead. But when the doors to Pico's auditorium were opened and the teachers entered to take their places, the mood changed quickly. There were balloons everywhere, each carrying the name of a Pico student. Crystal apples were on display at the front of the auditorium, each inscribed with the name of a Pico teacher. The auditorium walls were plastered with words and phrases that described the profession of teaching at its best. Huge placards carried terms like *coach, mentor, guide, guru,* and *leader.* There were pictures of previous students everywhere. The room was suddenly abuzz. Even the dyed-in-the-wool naysayers seemed overwhelmed by the banner across center stage. It said simply, "I'm just a great teacher!"

The room was still astir as people took their seats. In prior years, teachers had often settled into a deadening funk in the face of a drone of announcements about procedures and policies. This time, a different spirit was in the air. But what was it, and what was to come next?

As the room quieted down, Jaime Rodriguez walked on stage. "Normally," he said, "I would give a speech, hopefully better than last year's effort. But this year, something really different is in store. And now, let the show begin."

A group of strange faces walked on stage. Wilma Worthingham, a beloved teacher who had retired a few years earlier from Pico, was followed by a group of almost-familiar faces. As Wilma began to introduce each of the strangers, cries of recognition echoed across the room. "My God! Don't tell me that's Bernie," someone said. It

turned out that the strange faces had names that were very familiar—at least to their former teachers. Each of the Pico alumni said a few words thanking the teachers for everything that they had done, but it was Sid Holstrom that brought the crowd to its feet. "I was probably one of your worst, almost as bad as Charley Packer," he said. "And look at where I am now. And look at all the others here who wouldn't be where they are if you had not helped them when they were here. When you look at us, you see reflections of yourselves. We are your legacy. And we are only the tip of the iceberg. There are thousands more like us who owe you a debt of gratitude."

The ovation that followed seemed to last forever. It was not for anyone in particular, it was for everyone. As the din subsided, Phil Leckney came on. His opening words startled almost everyone present, especially those who knew him as Pico's resident cynic. "I am a phoenix. I have arisen from the ashes of a burned-out teacher. This year the magic is there for me. If it can be there for me, it can be there for anyone here."

Many in the audience were stunned. Someone murmured, "What happened to Phil?" One of Leckney's longtime friends wondered aloud what he had been drinking that morning. Seeming to anticipate the surprise and skepticism, Leckney continued, "There may be some in the room who wonder if I've gone crazy. I have not. But I'm once again crazy about teaching. I have three years left before I retire. I want to make them the best three years I ever had. I invite all of you to join me."

As Leckney left the stage to sustained applause, a young woman entered the stage. Few in the audience knew who she was. With her short, neatly coifed brown hair and tasteful, light blue summer suit, she looked as if she might be on her way to a job interview. She seemed too old to be a Pico student, yet too young to be a teacher. The newcomer walked slowly and hesitantly, almost as if she wished that she were somewhere else. But once at the microphone, she spoke in a steady voice. "My name is Rosemary Pulcini. This is my first year teaching, and I'm proud to start my career at Pico. When I interviewed for this job, someone asked me who I admired most. At that time, I wasn't really sure. But I've had the chance to talk to some of you in the past few weeks and to hear many stories about Pico's students and particularly its faculty. I want to tell you that my heroes and heroines are all right in this room. I'm looking forward to teaching here for a long time."

The third standing ovation tripled anything ever before seen on opening day at Pico. The meeting then adjourned to the cafeteria, normally a utilitarian spot with an ambiance of aluminum and Formica and a pervasive aroma of nondescript leftovers. Some teachers wondered if they had made the wrong turn when they found the cafeteria tables decorated with lace tablecloths and crystal candleholders. At every teacher's place was a name card and a large red apple. The event was hosted with gusto by an enthusiastic group of Pico parents. Luncheon was an international buffet featuring dishes from each of the ethnic groups represented at Pico. No detail was overlooked. Margaret Juhl heard one veteran say, "This lunch is better than anything I've ever imagined, even at 10 times the cost."

After the lunch, Margaret Juhl came to the microphone and said, "I came here 22 years ago because of the spirit I saw here. Over the years, that spirit has seen its highs and lows. But I think deep down it's always been here. This year, the Pico spirit is back stronger than ever. I would now like to introduce Pico's principal, Jaime Rodriguez. We are permitting him to say a few words because, frankly, we thought he deserved another chance after last year's opening-day performance."

Laughter filled the room, and Rodriguez was smiling broadly as he came to the lectern. All had been forgiven on both sides.

"What I have to say is very simple," Jaime began. "No school is much better or much worse than its faculty, and that's why I'm so proud of you and of this school. We have a great faculty here—some like Rosemary Pulcini who are just starting, others like Phil Leckney or Margaret Juhl who have served Pico for a quarter century. It's what you all do in the classroom that produces the results that we were all so proud of this morning when some of our graduates came back to say thank you. Pico has a history that we can all celebrate with pride. There have been ups and downs in recent times at Pico, and I spent much of last year just getting to know this place and its people. What I've learned convinces me that there are no limits to our future.

"As principal, my job is not to lead the charge, but to support and serve you so that you can use your talent and energy to provide the best possible educational experience for our students. Together we can bring new meaning to our watchword, Pico Pride. I want to introduce someone who can say this much better than I, because she is one of you."

Joan Hilliard walked to the microphone. Those who were close could tell she was nervous. Her voice was soft as she began. "When I came here a year ago, I thought my four years in the business world would serve me well—and they did. But there were still times this past year when I wondered whether I could, or should, stick it out. Without a lot of help and support from many of my friends in this room, I would never have made it. But I did, and there's one thing I'm sure of now—I'm just a great teacher, and so are all of you!"

With that, she brought into full view a small bronze oil lamp. With a flourish, she lit the wick of the lamp. "Now, it's time to light the lamp of learning to illuminate our spirit for another year."

From the wings, the student chorus marched confidently on stage. The school song had never sounded better. The cafeteria had never seen so many tears of joy.

# *Leadership Lessons*

## Celebrate Values and Culture

Pico's "fiesta" to honor current and past principals brought home the importance of celebration in helping people build spirit and keep the faith. Its success inspired the "I'm Just a Great Teacher" celebration, which became a transforming event in Pico's culture. Celebration and ceremony are antidotes to boredom, cynicism, and burnout. They bring members of a group together, strengthen bonds, and build spirit and faith. The following guideposts can help you apply those lessons to your own school.

*Learn and celebrate the history.* Cultures are created over time as people face challenges, solve problems, and try to make sense out of their experience. The present is always sculpted by powerful echoes from the past. Frequent glances in a school's rearview mirror are as necessary as having a vision of the future. Every school's history includes a mix of ups and downs, triumphs and tragedies. The triumphs deserve celebration. The tragedies, laced with ample doses of humor, can be turned into stories that are as instructive as they are entertaining.

*Diagnose the strength of the existing culture.* Some schools have very strong cultures: Beliefs, values, and practices are clear and widely shared; people are proud of the school and its traditions. Others have weak cultures: There is little agreement about or pride in the school's identity. In schools with strong cultures, as soon as you walk through the front door you're likely to see banners, slogans, photos, trophies, and displays of student work. The message is "We're proud of who we are and we want to share it with you." In schools with weak cultures, the only sign you see may be one

instructing visitors to report immediately to the principal's office. Weak cultures often call out for change; they are an invitation to strong leadership. Strong cultures are the reverse: They resist change and reject newcomers who are seen as enemies of tradition. The good news is that strong cultures are usually built on a history of success and progress. But unfortunately, the educational landscape is littered with too many toxic schools that have developed an entrenched culture of blaming, defeatism, and circle the wagons. If you sign on with one of those, you'll need patience, persistence, and a lot of support from somewhere to have much hope of making a positive difference.

*Reinforce and celebrate the culture's strengths.* Even in schools with weak or threadbare cultures, it is usually possible to find something worth celebrating. Some alumni have gone on to lead successful lives. There have been some star athletes, merit scholars, performing artists, or just some individuals whose never-say-die persistence against the odds is worth celebrating. Those stories, values, traditions, heroes, or heroines provide a vital starting point for updating, reinvigorating, and reframing the school's identity and culture.

*Mark transitions with ceremony.* Beginnings and endings, like triumphs and tragedies, require some form of symbolic recognition. The beginning of school, the end of a school year, the attainment of tenure, or the death of a student all cry out for cultural events. The military learned long ago that a change of command has to be marked with pomp and circumstance. Otherwise, the unit suffers, and the new person in charge has a hard time. In most schools, principals come and go without any special event. This leads to cultural sterility. The ups and downs, comings and goings of life in schools need cultural attention and support.

# PART VI

# *Values, Ethics, and Spirit*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# *Teaching and Leading*

## Finding a Balance

The spirit of Pico's opening day extravaganza endured well into fall. Teachers said this was the best start they remembered. The school felt alive and energized. People *wanted* to spend time there. Teachers who had never gone beyond their contractual obligation were arriving early to chat with colleagues and prepare for the day. Many parents commented that their children were enjoying school more than ever before. Residents who passed by on their way home from work on fall evenings were often impressed to notice so many lights still on and cars still in the parking lot.

The planning team for the opening celebration had grown in numbers with the addition of new volunteers and continued to meet regularly under its new name, The Pico Pride Pack. Everyone agreed that the approaching holiday season was the perfect time for another event—an ecumenical holiday party for the Pico community. Careful planning and a lot of sweat brought their idea to fruition. Phil Leckney, buoyed by his best fall in years, was a jovial and spirited master of ceremonies. Jaime Rodriguez donated what many thought must be the world's largest piñata. Margaret Juhl brought her still lovely voice to a medley of Hanukkah songs. Heidi Hernandez wowed everyone with her ballet solo from the *Nutcracker*. The students went wild when Roscoe, dressed as Santa Claus and accompanied by his elf, Armando, missed the piñata

12 times in a row. His final effort spread candy and small gifts across the entire cafeteria. Never had the first semester ended on such a high note.

Two weeks later, on a Saturday evening between Christmas and New Year's, Margaret Juhl received a tearful middle-of-the-night telephone call from Joan. "Margaret, the bottom just dropped out. Larry and I just had our biggest fight ever. It was the same thing he's been harping on for the last year. He said he was sick of playing second fiddle to my students. He gave me an ultimatum: either I cut back on my work, or he's cutting out. I got furious, but I tried to stay calm. I just said, 'I don't tell you how to do your job. What gives you the right to tell me how to do mine?' He yelled back at me, 'That's it! I've had it!' He walked out and slammed the door behind him. I was devastated. I thought we were starting to get past all this and that he understood how important teaching is to me, just as his work is important to him. It's as if in his mind, work is important if it's all about numbers and bottom lines, but not if it's about children! I don't know, maybe I'll never understand men. Maybe we'd be better off without them. But I've been crying since he left."

The conversation continued for more than an hour. Margaret mostly listened and tried to give Joan as much support as she could. Just before saying good-bye, they agreed to have lunch the next day.

When they met, Joan looked tired; her eyes were red and puffy. She acknowledged that she had sobbed much of the night, but she seemed more composed than she had the previous night. As the two sat together over pasta at La Trattoria, the conversation gradually moved from Joan's breakup to a bigger issue.

It was Margaret who signaled the transition. "You know, Joan, as we were talking last night, some real painful stuff came up for me. The early days at Pico felt a lot like they do today. We all did things together, we enjoyed each other, and we did great things for kids. But it also took a big chunk out of our personal lives. You probably wonder why I've stayed single for so long. Partly it's because someone special walked out of my life, too, for pretty much the same reasons Larry did. I still wish I'd found a better way to balance teaching and the rest of my life. It's great for everyone to say teachers should take a more active leadership role, but not if it keeps them from having a life outside of school."

Joan was frowning. "Margaret, you sound just like Larry. Why do women have to do all the compromising and balancing, while men just go on doing their thing? If you're a man, you can be

committed to your work *and* have a family. Women can do one or the other, but not both. Men get to work as much as they want, and we get the mommy track!"

"When you put it that way, it doesn't seem fair, does it?"

"It sure doesn't."

"Have you said all this to Larry?"

"I've tried, but whenever we try to talk about it, it pushes too many buttons for both of us. We just get angry and fight. We never seem to get past that to have a real conversation."

"I wish I had the answers," replied Margaret. "It seems to me there's more than one problem here. One involves relationships between men and women. It's about sex roles and about what men and women need from each other. It's also about power and about what it means to be male or female. There's a second issue of overload—we all feel rushed and too busy these days. That can affect any teacher, male or female. Right now, we're stuck—we don't know how to move on either issue."

"Maybe that's just how things are." Joan looked and sounded discouraged.

"Do you really believe that?" asked Margaret skeptically.

The question seemed to mobilize Joan's more optimistic side. "No, not really. I'm just down after last night. In fact, an idea just came to me. What if we talk about this stuff at the next Pico Pride meeting?"

"That's a terrific idea. Because maybe what we're talking about here is not problems, but dilemmas."

"What's the difference?" asked Joan.

"Problems have solutions. Dilemmas don't exactly *have* solutions, because you're caught between different values—like between commitment to teaching and commitment to family. It's not a tension that ever really goes away. You just have to look for better ways to manage it. That's why it makes sense to talk about this with the Pico Pride bunch. Right now we're all dealing with symptoms. We need to get a better handle on what's going on and what we can do about it. I don't know of any better way to do that than to talk with some colleagues who have the same concerns."

At the next Pico Pride meeting, Margaret and Joan presented the issues they had discussed. The nodding heads confirmed that others shared their concerns. On the surface, everything was going extremely well at the school, but something more troubling was bubbling underneath.

Phil Leckney led off the discussion. "I'll tell you one thing. You don't have to be female to worry about all this. I'm feeling caught in the middle myself. On the one hand, I've never felt better about my teaching. My classroom is running better than it has in years. The kids are learning, and I look forward to coming to school every day. But on the other hand, I miss all the spare time that I used to have. When I came to school at 7:30 and left at 2:30, I had time to do other things. I could work on my boat, spend time in the yard, and make a few bucks as a referee. I haven't been near my boat all year. The yard's a mess so it's a good thing it's covered with snow. My wife nags me about needing the extra money."

"Wait a minute, Phil. I understand what you're saying," responded Rosemary Pulcini, "but I'm not sure you really got Joan's message—because you've got a wife. You have someone who takes care of the home front while you focus on your career. Joan and I don't. I know what she's trying to say. For me, being a first-year teacher is simply *overwhelming*! There's never enough time to do it all. Lesson plans, correcting student work, talking to parents, going to meetings—it never ends. And I'm not sure how long it's going to take before my husband tells me he's fed up. Your wife doesn't work, does she, Phil?"

"Not now, but she used to before the kids." Phil paused and smiled as if to say that Rosemary's message hit home. Then he looked directly at Joan. "Maybe I'll always be a fossil in your eyes, Joan. You're right, my marriage is pretty traditional. But I wouldn't give up on Larry yet. Thinking back, I remember a time when I thought you were always on the attack, and I felt my best bet was to dive for cover. But all that changed when we started to listen to one another. If this old dinosaur can learn from you, I'll bet he can, too."

Joan rose from her chair, walked over to Phil, planted a kiss on his forehead, and calmly returned to her seat. Phil turned beet red. Everyone in the room was silent for a few moments before a wave of laughter spread over the group.

"You know," said Phyllis Gleason, "this conversation is a blessing. I've been worried for the last couple of months. I hear things. In one way or another, you all share what Margaret and Joan are talking about. What's happening now is a lot like what happened in Pico's heyday. That was more than 20 years ago. It almost broke my heart. We had drinking, divorces. This is a *déjà vu* that I never want to go through again. It's not just you teachers. I was talking to

Jaime's wife last week. She was telling me she's worried because she never sees him anymore."

"That's a good point," agreed Carlos. "We're not the only ones who worry. As we get deeper into this stuff, it's important to include Jaime as well as other teachers and staff. What do you think? Should we invite Jaime to our next meeting?"

The group quickly accepted Carlos's suggestion. At the next meeting, Rodriguez agreed that the issues deserved attention but seemed as perplexed as everyone else. "It's a dilemma. I've never been more proud of our school and what we're doing for our students. But the whole thing could crash if everyone burns out."

"If we all have the same concerns," said Carlos, "why not plan a retreat to see if we can get to the bottom of it?"

"I think it's a great idea," said Jaime. "I'll talk to the superintendent about some funds."

Joan responded angrily, "Now, wait a minute. Here we go again! If we do it over a weekend, it's another big chunk out of our personal lives."

"You're right, Joan," said Margaret. "It's a real catch-22. But I think we're going to have to spend some time in order to get more. Another possibility would be to ask the district to cover a day's worth of substitutes. That way, we could spend an evening on Thursday, a whole day on Friday, and a half-day on Saturday. Is that a compromise that people would buy? I think the union could go along with that, as long as it's voluntary for teachers."

"Well, Jaime, it's up to you. You have to sell it to Dr. Hofsteder. Would she buy it?" asked Joan.

"I think so, if the faculty is really behind it," Jaime replied.

As it turned out, getting faculty support was relatively easy. Many shared the same concerns and worried about how long the school could continue at the same pace. The superintendent threw her full weight behind the idea. She and the school board were so pleased with what was happening at Pico that they did not want to see their lighthouse project run out of steam.

An expanded Pico Pride Pack planned the retreat and developed a theme—"Thriving and Surviving." As they wrestled with how to organize the event, Margaret Juhl offered an idea. "A few years back," she said, "I took a course on school leadership."

"You wanted to be a principal, Margaret?" asked Phil Leckney skeptically.

"No. I just wanted learn more about how they think. And I remember this one framework that's really been very helpful for me. It talks about four main issues that every organization, schools included, needs to address. The first is to create a structure that works. The second is to respond to people's needs and provide the skills that they need. The third is to manage conflict effectively, and the last is to develop a shared sense of meaning and commitment. I think each of these may be important to the issues of balance and burnout that we're trying to get at. What if we had groups working on each of them?"

"Margaret," said Joan. "This all sounds *awfully* familiar. Haven't I heard this before somewhere?"

Margaret smiled. "You sure have. Many times. They're ideas that worked for me. I hoped they would for you, too."

"Well, I think they've been seeping in, even if I didn't always realize it," replied Joan.

"I don't know whether this conversation is a commercial or not, but it sounds like it's worth a try," Carlos commented.

Using Margaret's suggestion, the planning group broke the faculty and staff into groups, each charged with exploring one of four issues: (1) How can we use our time more efficiently? (2) How can we deal with conflict more productively? (3) What in-service training would help? Or is needed? (4) How can we balance schoolwide cohesion and commitment with family and other outside obligations?

Despite some tense moments, the retreat was a huge success. A range of issues and feelings came to the surface, but they were almost always framed in a way that allowed the group to get below what people were thinking and feeling to the real reasons and move forward. The group produced a number of new initiatives. It also identified areas where more information was needed. The efficiency team identified several structural avenues to make better use of time. One was to use team teaching to reduce duplication of effort. Another involved reducing the number of meetings that teachers attended. The overall impact was to free up time for individual teachers to do preparation and grading at school rather than taking it home.

The conflict group and the in-service groups collaborated to develop workshops on both alternative strategies for managing conflict and on techniques for time management. The cultural cohesion group concluded that the school needed to sponsor schoolwide

events that included spouses, partners, and families to reduce the separation between work and personal life. The group also remembered what the original Pico Pride Pack had demonstrated about the importance of symbolic beginnings and endings. They ensured that the retreat ended on a high note with a series of skits that left everyone rolling in the aisles.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# *A Talk About Values*

His Wednesday breakfast meeting with Brenda Connors was the most sacred item on Jaime Rodriguez's calendar. As their relationship deepened, both had come to value their own two-person support group that served as vital nourishment for mind and spirit. Over time, they delved ever more deeply into issues that principals often recognized but rarely voiced.

On a particular Wednesday in February, only a few weeks after the weekend retreat, Rodriguez wanted to talk about values. He had grown up in a family that put a strong emphasis on doing the right thing. His parents always had clear answers to every question of right and wrong. Now that he was a school principal, things often seemed fuzzier. "Somewhere I heard that the difference between management and leadership is that managers do things right and leaders do the right thing," he mused. "That sounds good, but how do you *know* what the right thing is?"

"Doesn't it come down to what you believe in and what your values are?"

"Sure, but that's what I'm trying to sort out," replied Rodriguez. "It's easy to say that I'm committed to education for all children. I really believe that. But I've been thinking about some of the tough situations I was up against last year. What made them so hard was trying to sort out conflicting values."

Brenda smiled. "You figured that out a lot quicker than I did when I was a young principal. Value conflicts are the real struggles. That's when it's real hard to tell the difference between a ball and a strike. It's like shifting from being an umpire to being a philosopher."

"I've been thinking about an article I read that talked about four important values in education," said Jaime. "Excellence, caring, justice, and faith. I like all of them, but they're often in conflict.

"The first value, excellence, is one that we always hear about. Our job is to help kids achieve as much as possible. In terms of that, the role of the leader is like an engineer or an architect—diagnosing how things are working and figuring out how to do it better."

"I'm all for excellence, but how can you champion mediocrity?" Brenda replied. "But I worry when that's the only thing people focus on. A school is not a factory. We're dealing with people, not widgets."

"That's why the second value is caring. It's the whole idea of schools as families, that people have an obligation to care about one another and to look out for each other's welfare. At its deepest, it's the whole issue of love," said Jaime.

"I like that," Brenda said. "It fits with the idea of the leader as servant—that my job is to understand people's needs and concerns, and to serve them as well as possible by building a caring community."

"But then sometimes you run into a conflict between caring and excellence. Maybe that's what I was wrestling with in dealing with Sam Shepherd. I didn't like what he did with kids, but I still wanted to treat him with respect. If I'd hurt him, it would have set a bad example for everyone else. I was caught between caring and excellence, and I had to find some way to balance them," said Rodriguez.

"That's exactly what you did," Brenda responded. "But where does justice fit in?"

"Well, as I understand the article, the basic idea of justice is fairness. It's like the statue of the blindfolded goddess with the scales. People have a right to fair and equal treatment. In dealing with Shepherd, it was important to be fair to him and to the students."

"That makes sense. Maybe the newsletter is another example. You felt that people didn't care about you, and they felt that you didn't care about them. Maybe the deeper issue was justice: They felt you weren't being fair. Like when Leckney said you were favoring the Chicano teachers."

"These things are really complicated," said Jaime. "Everything is layered on top of something else, and a lot of times different layers are pitted against each other."

"Was that true for the discipline issue, too?"

"Probably. On the one hand, we were trying to do what's best for children, so it was an issue of excellence. But we were also trying to

balance the interests of teachers, parents, kids, and others. It wasn't going to work unless people felt that the process and the product were fair."

"But I think there's even another layer. Maybe this is where that fourth value comes in. You could say that the whole process was a ceremony in search of a cultural anchor for your school community. You wanted something that everyone could believe in. The search for justice was also a search for faith."

"In a way, that's what my whole first year was about. That's what I think I was trying to do with my vision speech last fall. Teachers need to believe they make a difference. We both know a lot of teachers who burned out somewhere along the line. Education is so tough, and the rewards are so intangible. It's a challenge to keep the faith, particularly when so many people are bashing schools and teachers."

"Jaime, that's the most important thing a principal does. Keep the faith, so everyone else doesn't lose theirs."

"Sounds right, but I sure had some moments of doubt this past year."

"We all do. Every year. But the longer I've been a principal, the more I'm convinced that a principal has to be a spiritual leader. We have to help people recapture the meaning of their work, and we have to talk about the things that touch their hearts. Remember the Fiesta de Pico? When the Pico faculty anointed you as their new principal, I got goose bumps. When you're dealing with a generation of children in a school, every day should give people goose bumps."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# *The Essence of Teaching*

### Leaving a Legacy

No one expected it. Margaret Juhl was close to retirement, but everyone assumed that she would go on forever. The news that she had cancer knocked the wind out of everyone in the Pico community. Each day, people waited for an update on her condition. Had the surgery been successful? Was the chemotherapy working? When would she be back to work? What if she never returned?

Phyllis Gleason became a human hot line for news about Margaret's progress. Bill Hill served as the primary link to parents and the community. Grapevines sometimes distort the news in the direction of worst-case scenarios, but Pico's gossip network was remarkably accurate and positive. Everyone hoped that positive thinking would help Margaret's recovery and speed her return to the school she loved so much.

On a warm and sunny spring morning in late April, Joan Hilliard, Carlos Cortez, and Phil Leckney were the first to visit Margaret at St. Joseph's Hospital. Phyllis Gleason had declined an invitation to come along. "The best medicine for someone who loves teaching as much as Margaret is a visit from a few of her closest buddies. I know Mr. Rodriguez feels the same way. He and I will be over at St. Joseph's another time. Just be sure to call me as soon as you finish your visit."

As the three teachers walked down the shiny floor of a hallway that felt sterile and smelled of antiseptic, they wondered how Margaret would look and what her condition would be. As they entered Room

203, they were pleasantly surprised. Margaret was propped up in bed with a book, her wire-rimmed, half-circle reading glasses sitting crooked on her nose. The color in her face looked normal, although they suspected that makeup made it so. But the twinkle in her eye and the smile on her face were genuine—the good old Margaret look that they would recognize anywhere.

"Joan! Carlos! Phil! So good of you to come. I told the doctors if they didn't let me have some visitors, I was going to walk out of here against medical advice. Come on in! Sit down! Tell me the latest scoop. How's my class? Who's subbing for me? Are the kids behaving? Has Jaime been called in a rescue mission yet?"

Margaret's visitors wondered if they had wandered into an interrogation chamber rather than a friend's hospital room. As the hail of questions continued, they looked in vain for somewhere to sit. With the overflow of flowers, plants, balloons, and gifts, there were no empty spots. They were hard pressed even to find a place for the philodendron that they had brought as a gift from the faculty. Carlos started to move a huge bouquet of multicolored spring flowers from the chair by Margaret's bed in the hopes of clearing a place to sit.

"No, Carlos, don't move that one. That's from my kids. Every one of them signed the card, can you believe it? Where did they ever get the money to pay for something that gorgeous? Come on, two of you can sit on the foot of the bed. Phil, lean against the sink. I want to be able to see you while you bring me up to date. So what's new at Pico? I'm dying to know."

Everyone winced at Margaret's choice of expressions, but Carlos started the briefing, only to be interrupted by Joan with a story about Phil's failed attempt to play a classic "trick-the-rookie" prank on Rosemary Pulcini. Pulcini had caught on so quickly that the prank backfired and Phil himself became the butt of the joke. Phil blushed while everyone else in the room laughed uproariously. Margaret laughed so hard that tears rolled down her cheeks, streaking her rose-colored makeup. For the next half-hour, her visitors talked nonstop, sometimes with all three talking at once.

Margaret took it all in as if she were reconnecting to a vital source of energy from which she had been shut off for too long. As Phil was filling Margaret in on some of the latest community gossip via Bill Hill, Joan saw a hint of pain cross Margaret's face. She gently nudged her colleagues. "We could go on for hours and that might be just what Margaret wants, but I know the doctors will have

our heads if we overstay our welcome." Margaret seemed both disappointed and relieved when her guests agreed that it really was time for them to go.

"Before you go, I want you to take all these envelopes with you. One is for my substitute, to give her some details of where to find things and some sage warnings about the students who are most notorious for driving off subs. The other envelope is for my students. I want Horace to read the first part to the class and then give it to Sally for the finale. Horace will be great in getting the funny stuff across, but he'd flub the last part. There's also a note for Phyllis and for Bill, so that they can help get the word around. And this one is for Jaime. He sent me a note a couple of weeks ago asking about some personnel decisions. Tell him I'm sorry I wasn't able to get back to him sooner. I know these things have been bothering him."

As Joan was wondering to herself whether there was any message that Margaret wanted to send to her colleagues, Margaret picked up the book that she had put down as they came in. "The last thing I want you to do is go by Barry's bookstore and pick up some copies of this book, *The Courage to Teach*, by Parker Palmer. I know some people have already read it, but all of us should. It's a challenging book, but if you stay with it, it really gets to heart of what it means to be a teacher. I find that every chapter really gets me thinking about myself and my teaching and reminds me how much I really want to get back to my classroom. It would make me feel good to know that others are reading it too. In fact, the assignment for all of you is to read it before the next time you visit."

Joan, Carlos, and Phil all promised to do their homework. Each gave Margaret a hug and left carrying the envelopes that Margaret had entrusted to them.

"She looks great," observed Phil as they walked down the hall.

"She does," Joan replied, "but even though she seemed like her old self when we got there, she wore out fast. Did you notice the pain in her face just before we left? I'm not sure she's as good as she looks. I just hope she's going to make it."

"Don't even say that, Joan," replied Carlos. "She will. She's got to."

"Why do you think she wants us to read that book?" asked Phil.

"I guess we'll find out when we read it," Joan replied. "Let's stop by Barry's on the way home. It's only about four blocks from

where I live. We can get the books before you drop me off. That way we can take them to school tomorrow."

When Margaret's three visitors arrived at Pico the next morning, they were in such demand that they felt almost like visiting rock stars in the presence of admiring fans. But the fans were not looking for autographs. They wanted to know how things were going with Margaret. Joan distributed the envelopes as Margaret had requested. Phyllis and Bill greeted theirs with such enthusiasm that Joan knew they could not wait to begin making their rounds to spread the news.

Two weeks later, Joan was sitting in her apartment on a rainy May evening when the phone rang. When she answered, it was Margaret at the other end.

"Margaret, how are you? You know, you're still the only thing we talk about at Pico anymore. Everyone keeps asking why we were all supposed to read the book."

"Well, that's part of why I'm calling. Joan, I'd really like to talk to you. I know how busy you are these days, but could you find time for another hospital visit in the next few days?"

"Is tomorrow afternoon too soon? Four o'clock?"

"That would be perfect. Just you, O.K.?" said Margaret.

Joan went to bed still pondering the meaning of Margaret's phone call. Nothing was said directly, but they had known each other so long that they often needed no words to understand what the other was thinking. Joan hated even to think it, yet she was almost sure that Margaret's call had not been prompted by good news.

When Joan arrived at Margaret's hospital room the next day, she was again greeted by the same cheerful Margaret, this time perched in the chair next to her hospital bed. Cards and writing materials were spread in a series of neat piles across her bed. "Joan, thanks for coming. I'm still writing thank-you notes. It's just amazing all the cards I've received. I was just reading one from a girl I taught more than 20 years ago, and I hadn't heard from her since. Let me clear some of this stuff away so you have someplace to sit."

"How about if I just move the stuff on this chair over to the window ledge?" At Margaret's nod, Joan sat down. "You're looking better every time I see you," said Joan, trying to sound as cheerful and convincing as she could.

"Well, the truth is I look a little more tired every time you see me. At least that's how I feel. Look, we've never tried to kid each other. The news from my doctor isn't as good as I'd hoped. I

probably won't make it back to school this spring. This might have been my last year teaching." Margaret's voice was soft and there were tears forming on her cheeks, though hardly visible through Joan's own tears.

Fighting the impulse to break down and sob, Joan came over and hugged Margaret awkwardly. "Please go sit down!" said Margaret. "There are some things I need to say."

Joan returned to her seat, fumbled through her purse for tissues, and struggled to compose herself.

"I've had a lot of time to think while I've been here—about my life, and even more about my career and how teaching has touched every corner of my life in some way. I've been asking myself whether I would do anything differently if I had it all to do over. You tried another career before becoming a teacher. I never even considered other options. And there are a few times when I did something pretty silly or said something that hurt someone else. On these things I wish I had a second chance. But the thing I feel surer about than anything else is that I made the right choice when I decided to be a teacher. I've started to think about what I'm giving back to a profession that's done so much for me."

Joan knew she should not interrupt, but the import of Margaret's talk about her legacy was too upsetting. Did it mean that she was giving up? Joan blurted out, "Let's talk about the future, not the past."

Margaret smiled and responded calmly, "The future is exactly what I'm talking about. That's why I wanted to speak to you alone. You're very special to me, Joan. Have you read the book I assigned?"

"Every word. It was wonderful."

"I knew you'd like it. As I was reading it, it got me thinking again about the spiritual side of what we do. In earlier times, schooling was basically religious instruction. Somewhere along the line, we got confused and started to think of schools as factories instead of temples. As teachers, we have to hold on to the essence of what we're about. Otherwise, we stand to lose everything. Tracy Kidder has a beautiful way of talking about it in his book, *Among Schoolchildren.* Wait a second, I have his book here somewhere. O.K., here it is. 'Good teachers put snags in the river of children passing by, and over time, they redirect hundreds of lives . . . There is an innocence that conspires to hold humanity together, and it is made up of people who can never fully know the good they have done' " (Kidder, 1989, p. 313).

"I love it! Isn't that what we were trying to get at with our celebration of teaching last year?"

"Yes, that was a great beginning, probably one of the best things we ever did at Pico," said Margaret. "But there's a deeper level of what we're about that we didn't quite get to. It's a level we're almost embarrassed to talk about—the spiritual dimension that makes teaching a calling. It's about values: the values we live by and the values we pass on to our students."

"Isn't caring the core value in teaching?" asked Joan.

"It's critical, but there are other important values that we often overlook. Take Roscoe, for example. You certainly cared about him, but it took more than caring. Being loved was not all that Roscoe needed. He also needed to master some basic skills and learn to set higher standards for himself."

"That makes a lot of sense. One of the toughest challenges I had with Roscoe was deciding when to tell him how much I liked him and when to really push him to do better work and set higher standards for himself. So there are really two values in teaching?"

"We're only halfway there. In deciding when to support or push Roscoe, you also had to consider fairness for everyone in the class. Roscoe's like a lot of children these days. When they look around them, they feel the world is unjust. You agree. In trying to make it fairer for them, you can create injustice for others—particularly the kids in the middle. You know how much your students insist on fairness. They want a just classroom."

"That's what happened to me when we finally got Roscoe straightened out. Some of the other parents complained that their children were getting shortchanged," replied Joan thoughtfully.

"Can you begin to see that when you try to take all these competing values into account, there's always going to be tension? A classroom has to be caring, it has to be just, and it has to value performance and results. But even deeper than that, it has to be a place of hope. It has to have meaning and to build faith."

"What do you mean by faith?" asked Joan.

"Faith is believing in things when everything tells you not to. It's believing in Roscoe even when his record tells you you're fooling yourself. It's convincing Roscoe to believe in himself even though almost no one else ever has. It's getting his parents to have faith in him and what school can mean for him. Even more important, teachers have to believe in themselves and in their work. That's where I think

we've fallen down. Just pick up any magazine or newspaper. Listen to the conversations in restaurants. Thinking about how we teachers talk when we're together. The public has lost faith in us, and we've lost faith in ourselves."

"But what about the opening-day celebration or the holiday party? Weren't we on the right track?" asked Joan.

"Of course. They were both very important. So was the retreat, because it gave us a chance to talk about balancing conflicting values. For me, that's one of the things that makes Parker Palmer's book so poignant. He said some things I'll never forget, and I want to make sure that people remember them at Pico even if I'm not there. That's why I wanted you to distribute the books. And I want you to promise me that you'll have the same conversation with your colleagues that we're having now. It'll be even more powerful coming from you, because you've tasted life on the other side. You chose to be a teacher after trying a career in business. I don't know why I feel so strongly about this, but I do. I have my own faith, and it's really a comfort now. But I'm also drawing heavily on my faith in teaching. I want to make sure others carry on these values while they have more time than I do to do good things for kids. Do you promise?"

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# *Passing the Torch*

Joan's promise reverberated on the drive from the hospital to her apartment. When she arrived to an empty apartment, she had an impulse to call Larry, just to have someone to talk to. But she resisted, remembering how rarely Larry had understood her dedication to teaching. Instead, she picked up Tracy Kidder's book and started to read the final chapter again. As she drifted off, the last few sentences kept replaying in her mind. "She belonged among schoolchildren. They made her confront sorrow and injustice. They made her feel useful. Again this year, some had needed more help than she could provide. There were many problems that she hadn't solved. But it wasn't for the lack of trying. She hadn't given up. She had run out of time" (Kidder, 1989, p. 342).

It was still dark when the sound of her telephone woke Joan the next morning. Startled, she looked at her clock to see that it was only 5 A.M. She was almost afraid to answer. Her worst fears were confirmed when Jaime Rodriguez said, "Joan, she's gone."

"Margaret? Oh, God, no! What happened?"

"They aren't sure yet. The operation and the chemotherapy took a lot out of her, but even the doctors were surprised."

"I can't believe it," said Joan, crying softly as she spoke. "I saw her yesterday. She looked tired, but I never expected this."

"I'm planning to have a brief schoolwide assembly this morning. I think we should tell everyone at once. I'd like to say a few words and then have a couple of teachers talk about her. I'm hoping to get someone like Phil Leckney or Vivian Chu—someone at Pico who's known Margaret for a long time. Bill Hill will be great

because so many of the kids know and trust him. I also wanted you to say something, because I know how close you and Margaret have become."

"I don't know, Jaime. I'm not sure I can do it. I might just stand up there and cry."

"I'm not sure I can do it either, but I figure as the principal, I have to give it my best. I'm pretty sure that if there's anyone Margaret would want up there, it's you. You're the last person who saw her alive."

"That's why this is so hard to believe." She was crying softly as she spoke. "But you're trying to do too much too soon. Have the assembly today, but make it brief. We need more time to plan the right way to remember Margaret."

After a moment's hesitation, Rodriguez agreed. He went to work to plan for a brief assembly. Joan began to think about how Pico could celebrate Margaret's life.

The news of her death had spread quickly. There was hardly a sound as students and staff filed into the auditorium later that morning. The mood was somber. Only a few muffled sobs punctuated the heavy silence. Rodriguez was calm and controlled as he made the brief announcement of Margaret Juhl's death. He informed them when the funeral would be, and when visitors could pay their last respects. He also announced that Pico would hold its own memorial assembly the day after the funeral. "And now," he said, his voice beginning to crack, "let's make the rest of the day just what Ms. Juhl would have wanted it to be—a day when everyone learns. That's the highest tribute we can pay to a teacher we all loved and admired."

Many staff and students sat in silence for a few moments before slowly moving to the aisles. The only noise was the shuffling of feet. The usual din of conversation gradually picked up as people moved back to their classrooms. At the end of the day, several teachers remarked that even though students were subdued, they seemed focused and eager to do their best.

On the day following the funeral service at Largren's Mortuary, Pico held its own celebration of Margaret's life. Jaime Rodriguez and members of the Pico Pride Pack had spent hours planning an event that would mirror Margaret's importance to the school. But without her steady hand and unflappable spirit, the planning process had little of the joy and humor always there in the past. Everyone felt

her absence, but it spurred them on to work with more intensity and focus than ever before.

Pico's memorial service was comforting, moving, and uplifting for everyone. Before it started, Joan Hilliard felt almost like an emotional wreck. Yet as she began to speak, the words flowed. Steadily, smoothly, and straight from her heart. Only after sitting down did she see the visible signs of her impact. Staff and students were in tears all over the auditorium. It was then that Joan herself began to feel the full force of what she had said.

As the service drew to a close, Joan's mind wandered back to her first days at Pico and especially to the day that Margaret first came into her classroom, just after Roscoe and Armando had destroyed her day. She beamed through her sadness as she reviewed how far she and the school had come since then. She thought about Roscoe and how well he had been doing in Margaret's class before she died. Just as she began to wonder how well Roscoe would cope with Margaret's loss, she saw him enter the room with Heidi, Armando, and several other students pushing a wagon toward the podium. Perched unsteadily on the wagon was a large tree, its burlap-wrapped root ball hanging over the sides. As the entourage approached with its swaying cargo, Joan's eyes met Roscoe's, and she noticed the tears rolling down one of the largest grins she had ever seen on his face. It was different from the mischievous grin that she had seen so many times in the past. This was the earnest, self-satisfied look of someone who was confident he had done something really *right*.

The tree was not in the script, but a smiling nod from Phyllis to Rodriguez was the only signal he needed to welcome the group and invite them to the stage. To Joan's astonishment, it was Roscoe, not Heidi, who came to the microphone. His words came out in a confident tone. "Ms. Juhl is going to heaven, but we don't really want to give her up. So we students took up a collection and bought this tree. We want you all to come outside with us and watch as we plant it in front of the school and water it. That way, we can keep Ms. Juhl's spirit with us and remember what she done for us."

Heidi Hernandez followed Roscoe to the microphone and read a poem that she had written. It was about a teacher who planted seeds of learning every day. All the seeds began to grow into beautiful plants, each different from the other. Over the years, so many plants grew that no one could even count them, but everyone could

see how much more beautiful the world had become. Joan tried unsuccessfully to hold back the onrush of tears, but gave up as she noticed that she was not alone.

As she left the auditorium, Joan was approached by a man wearing the kind of dark suit that she associated with lawyers and bankers. "Excuse me," he said. "I'm a former student of Margaret Juhl. She was the best teacher I ever had, and she made a big difference for me. I just wanted to thank you for the eulogy—it meant a lot to me."

"Margaret meant a lot to me, too," Joan replied. There was something about the stranger that felt very comforting to her, and she wondered who he was.

"Have we met before?"

"I don't think so," he replied. "I'm Steve Riley. I'm a lawyer in Rosehill, and I do some work for the school board."

"Of course," Joan replied. "Margaret told me about you. She was very proud of you."

"It was herself she should have been proud of. I was a pretty confused kid when I came into her class. Anyway, thanks again for what you said. Maybe we can get together some time, and share reminiscences."

"I'd like that." She hoped he meant it when he promised to call.

***

"Where did the years go," Jaime Rodriguez asked himself, as he was about to begin his sixth year as Pico's principal. His mind had begun to wander as he sat in the first principals' meeting of the new school year, half listening to the associate superintendent's announcements of new district policies. His thoughts floated over Pico's past five years. Being recognized as a school of excellence had been an enormous satisfaction to everyone at the school. But he felt even more gratified at how far he, the staff, and the community had come. Just then, his thoughts were interrupted when the associate superintendent asked, "Why are you smiling? Is there something funny about this policy?"

"I guess I was admiring all the work you put into it," Jaime responded. The associate superintendent droned on, and Rodriguez returned to his memories. This time he thought about Brenda Connors and what an important force she had been in his career. She

had retired and moved to Florida, and Rodriguez often thought about how much he missed her. If she had been there, he would have expected a note under the table complimenting him on his quick recovery. He thought about how much of her wisdom had been incorporated into his own philosophy. Just then, his eyes wandered down the table to Sandy Dole, the new principal at Hillview Elementary School, only a few miles from Pico. She definitely was not smiling. She seemed to be losing a difficult struggle to follow every word in the associate superintendent's presentation. More than anything, she looked plain scared. Was she feeling the same way he had five years ago?

At the end of the meeting, he made a special point of pulling her aside. He introduced himself and asked her, "How's it going?"

She paused, gulped, and stammered, "You want the truth?"

"Nothing but."

"Well," she hesitated, then plunged ahead. "I'm buried in paper. The school secretary quit two weeks before I started, and we still don't have a replacement. Classes start next week, and I'm short two teachers. I'm not sure I'll make it through the week."

Jaime felt a wave of nostalgia. Smiling warmly, he said, "That sounds pretty much on target for your first week. I felt the same way my first year at Pico. How about a cup of coffee?"

Two weeks later, Joan Hilliard found herself sitting with a new teacher, Francesca King, on the carved wooden bench by the oak tree in Pico's Margaret Juhl Patio. It was a beautiful September day, and Francesca had asked if they could meet somewhere away from her classroom. Joan automatically suggested the patio—whenever she went there, she felt Margaret's presence.

As Francesca started to talk, it was clear that she had wanted a setting well away from the chaos that had been her classroom that day. When Joan asked, "How's it going?" Francesca's words tumbled out in an almost frantic stream.

"It's going downhill fast. My class is out of control, and I don't know what to do about it. I'm afraid I'm in over my head. Maybe I should quit now before it gets any worse. I've always wanted to be a teacher, but I never thought it could be this tough. I'm working day and night, but I'm still losing my class, and my love life is going to hell. I feel like I'm drowning!"

Joan smiled as memories of her first encounter with Margaret flooded back. "This tree is beautiful, isn't it? It was planted here

six years ago in honor of a wonderful teacher, Margaret Juhl. She was my best friend." Joan noticed the puzzled look on Francesca's face and went on. "You're probably wondering what that has to do with you. At about this point in my first year as a teacher, I was ready to quit, too."

"That's hard to believe," Francesca protested. "People say you're one of the best teachers here."

"That's where the tree comes in," said Joan with a smile. "I wouldn't have made it through the first term if Margaret Juhl hadn't taken me under her wing. Tell me about your day. If we put our heads together, we might be able to figure out some ways to make it a little easier."

# *Epilogue*

Before her arrival at Pico School, much of what Joan Hilliard knew about teaching and Jaime Rodriguez knew about leading was based on course work, reading, and a few gleanings from earlier experience in teaching or in the business world. It was all helpful—anything was better than nothing. But it was only the beginning of their education. Working in the trenches day to day helped each of them gradually develop the know-how and wisdom that can only be gained from experience and practice. While their appreciation for books, and for new ideas and concepts, actually grew over time, they also came to understand that ideas were useful only when you know how to use them. This book tries to illustrate the process of converting knowing-about into know-how. In the dialogues between Juhl and Hilliard, Rodriguez and Connors, you witness a continuing process of reflection and dialogue about practice. Reflection is something that readers can and should do by themselves, but its value is enhanced immeasurably with help from others—friends, colleagues, and mentors.

A book is only a partial substitute for the kind of sustained, intense, and personal relationship that a young professional can develop with an experienced and wise senior colleague. But we hope that our effort can help you reap some of the same benefits by raising provocative questions, offering new perspectives, challenging your thinking, and encouraging your heart.

We hope that it will also encourage you to ensure that dialogue and mentoring are a rich and continuing part of your professional life. Both teachers and principals often feel isolated and trapped in

their classrooms and offices. Though rarely alone, they are often lonely. They are starved for opportunities to talk freely and openly with other adults who can really understand what their life is like. Fellow teachers and administrators can become allies and guides for each other. Like Juhl and Hilliard, Brenda and Jaime, they can help one another create an inspiring and elegant conversation.

# *Annotated Bibliography*

## A. General


Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1997). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (2d ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book presents a systematic overview of our ideas about leadership and organizations, with many illustrations and examples from schools, colleges, government, and the private sector.

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. E. (2001). *Leading with soul: An uncommon journey of spirit.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

In *Leading with Soul*, we explore the spiritual underpinnings of leadership. We argue that effective leadership ultimately resides in soul and faith and that spirited leaders develop their own gifts so that they may share them with others.

Gardner, J. W. (1989). *On leadership*. New York: Free Press.

If you could read only one book on leadership, this would be a very good choice. Gardner packs a lot of wisdom and experience into a highly readable and valuable book.

Johnson, S. M. (1990). *Teachers at work*. New York: Basic Books.

Johnson's book provides a very insightful view of how schools function as workplaces for teachers. She documents many of the barriers and frustrations that teachers encounter in bureaucratic organizations and offers many helpful ideas about how to make schools better places for teaching and learning.

Kidder, T. *Among Schoolchildren.* (1989). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Palmer, P. (1997). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
This book was Margaret Juhl's gift to her colleagues because it expressed so well her belief that teaching has to come from the heart and be rooted in each teacher's identity.

## B. Power and Politics

Kotter, J. P. (1985). *Power and influence: Beyond formal authority.* New York: Free Press.
This book is written for corporate managers, but school leaders will still find it very useful. It provides very clear and comprehensive discussions of power and politics in organizations. Kotter's discussion of the "power gap" in administrative jobs and his chapters on managing your boss are invaluable.

## C. Responding to Human Needs

Barth, R. (1990). *Improving schools from within.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
This is Roland Barth at his best, offering a clear and compelling vision of how principals, teachers, parents, and children can work together to build learning communities.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (1988). *The leadership challenge: How to get extraordinary things done in organizations.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
A stimulating and inspiring discussion of the practices of managers operating at their personal best.

## D. Understanding Structure in Schools

Weiss, C., Cambone, J., & Wyeth, A. (1992, August). Trouble in paradise: Teacher conflicts in shared decision making. *Education Administration Quarterly*, *28*(3), 350–367.
This provocative paper documents many of the promises and pitfalls of shared leadership and teacher empowerment. In a

national sample of high schools, Weiss found that there is a price to be paid for participative approaches to decision making, a price about which teachers are often ambivalent. The article suggests that even in progressive schools, teacher leadership is conspicuous mostly for its absence, but we think it also shows how important it is for teachers to become more active leaders.

## E. Symbols and Culture in Schools

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1992, Autumn). What makes a team work? Inside the soul of a new machine. *Organizational Dynamics*, 34–44.

This article uses a famous case of an unusually effective design team to illustrate the symbolic and cultural elements that are critical to peak performance in teams.

Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. (1982). *Corporate cultures.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

A groundbreaking best-seller that first popularized the idea of organizational culture. This is the original and still one of the better overviews of what culture is, how it works, and how it can be shaped.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. (1990). *The principal's role in shaping school culture.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

A down-to-earth, practical guide to analyzing and changing school culture.

## F. Ethics in Teaching and Leading

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1992). Images of leadership. *The American School Board Journal, 179*(4), 36–39.

This article spells out the four values that Joan and Margaret discuss in Chapter 7 and relates them to four different images of what a school is: family, factory, jungle, and cathedral.

*"Here is a rare blend of storytelling and analysis, brought together in a book that is both insightful and inviting. Lee Bolman and Terry Deal allow us to see our schools, and ourselves, through the lens of imagination rarely found in educational literature, offering embattled and discouraged educators the precious gifts of vision and hope."*

Parker J. Palmer, author
*Let Your Life Speak* and *The Courage to Teach*

*"I love this book!* ***Reframing the Path to School Leadership*** *is full of great spirit, liveliness, and energy. Bolman and Deal are master storytellers, and this tale will inspire every school leader, whether administrator, teacher, coach, parent, or student."*

Jim Kouzes, coauthor
*The Leadership Challenge* and *Encouraging the Heart*

## The key to becoming a highly effective leader is to develop powerful habits of mind!

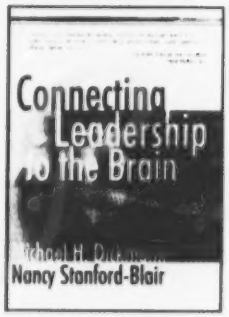
The best leaders use multiple frames or lenses to view common challenges and to solve their most difficult problems. Through a series of dialogues between a novice and a master teacher, and between a new and a seasoned principal, best-selling authors Bolman and Deal demonstrate how framing—and then reframing—challenges brings clarity, helps to anticipate problems, and leads to more comprehensive and powerful leadership strategies.

The four frames most commonly used by teachers and administrators are:

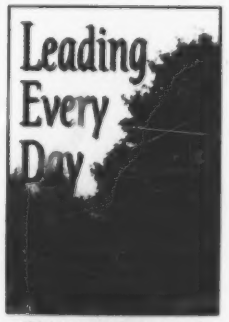
- The political frame—conflict and compromise are a constant source of renewal
- The human resource frame—sharing individual needs and motives nurtures a sense of ownership
- The structural frame—clear organizational standards and goals lead to greater productivity
- The symbolic frame—culture, rituals, and beliefs cultivate shared values and meanings

By reframing situations, educators ultimately gain more confidence and certainty in their decisions, and reduce the anxieties that can arise with difficult choices. In **Reframing the Path to School Leadership**, Bolman and Deal provide an optimistic view of what can go right in schools today—and what possibilities lie ahead for classroom and school leadership!

Other Corwin Press Books Available:




ISBN:0-7619-7668-X




ISBN:0-7619-4513-X

**CORWIN PRESS, INC.**
A Sage Publications Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320-2218
Call: 800-818-7243 Fax: 800-417-2466
www.corwinpress.com

ISBN 0-7619-4607-1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE